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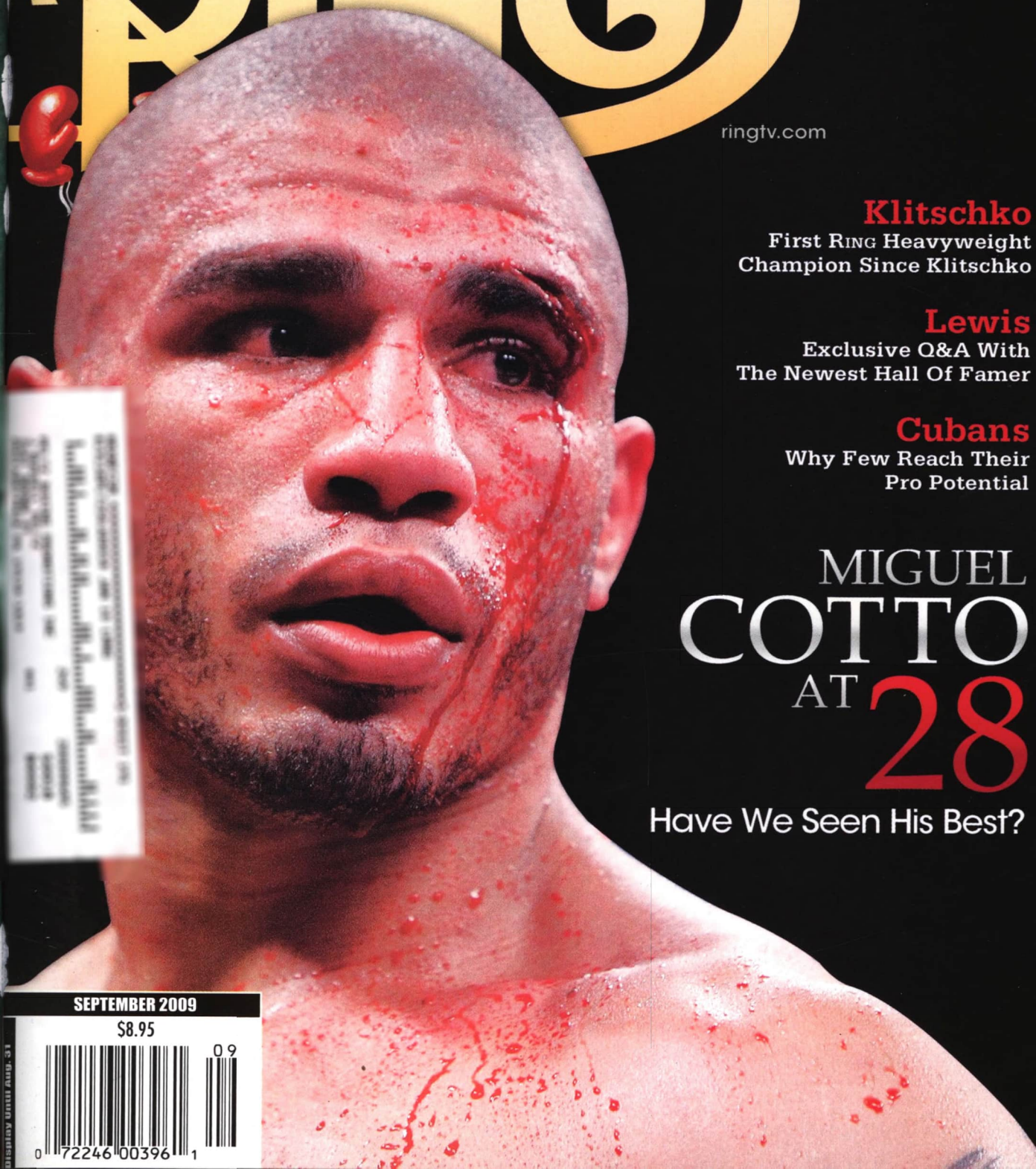

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Volume 88, No. 10 September 2009

The Ring

The Magic That Is Manny

Manny Pacquiao really didn't want to return Ricky Hatton's RING championship belt. "I want to take it back to the Philippines," he said, wide-eyed and slightly taken aback by this unexpected turn of events.

We were at the door of his dressing room, in the middle a chaotic postfight celebration and media frenzy, but Pacquiao paused in the eye of the hurricane and patiently listened to my explanation:

I had promised Hatton, as I do all defending champions, that if he lost, his belt would be returned to him later that night. But first, the new champ would have the opportunity to be seen and photographed with the symbol of his victory. Manny would get a new, personalized RING belt (his third in three weight classes) as soon as it could be manufactured.

Despite the hectic circumstances, Pacquiao heard me out and graciously surrendered the belt. Then he pressed his hands together in the prayer position and bowed his head, Namaste style. It was a small window into the heart and mind of the man considered today's finest fighter, the sort of peek that tells you there is indeed a compassionate Yin to his warrior Yang.

Six weeks later I had the pleasure of upholding my end of the bargain by presenting Pacquiao with THE RING junior welterweight championship belt in his suite at Manhattan's St. Regis Hotel. When Manny came into the room and saw the belt on the coffee table, he bent over the open case and carefully read the inscriptions on the three panels, saying the words softly to himself. The expression on his face said it all—it had been worth the wait.

When the picture taking and small talk was over, we sat on the couch and watched Will Smith zap aliens in *Independence Day*. Thinking back, it was kind of surreal, but at the time it seemed the most natural thing in the world.

There's no pretense with Manny. He was the quietest and most soft-spoken person in the room, but despite the laidback style and humble demeanor, he radiated a predator vibe. It was easiest to see in his eyes and by the way he moved, but it's always there, under control but there nonetheless.

It is the play between these two opposites that creates the man and the fighter, a delicious tension that is at the root of his amazing popularity and fighting prowess. Most people probably don't think of it that way, but they sense it nonetheless.

Another aspect of the same paradigm is Manny's almost total lack of hostility toward his opponents. In fact, Pacquiao frequently befriends his victims and invites them to visit him in the Philippines. This side of his personality is the perfect counterweight to his merciless assault inside the ring and a huge part of his appeal.

All too soon, my meeting with Manny was over. He wanted to get to Madison Square Garden early to watch colleague Rodel Mayol challenge Ivan Calderon for THE RING junior flyweight title on the Miguel Cotto-Joshua Clottey undercard. When Michael Buffer introduced Pacquiao to the crowd at the Garden, he received a thunderous ovation from the mainly Puerto Rican gathering of almost 18,000 Cotto partisans.

It takes a very special fighter to elicit that sort of reception from the rabid fans of a potential adversary. Hatton wasn't in attendance, but if he were, I'm sure he would have been cheering along with everybody else.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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PUBLISHER
Stuart M. Saks

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Nigel Collins

MANAGING EDITOR
Joseph Santoliquito

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David Romanosky

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Cliff Campo
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William Dettloff

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Kenneth J. Gudaitis

CIRCULATION SERVICES
David Tyler

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES
Robert Gasparri
(213) 233-2952
sepub@sepublications.com

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES
Sports and Entertainment
Publications, LLC
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Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0529
1-800-846-6438
custsrvcsep@sepublications.com

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Opening Shot

A CUT ABOVE

Miguel Cotto suffered a hideous cut on his left eyebrow after a clash of heads with Joshua Clottey during the third round of their fight at New York's Madison Square Garden on June 13. Cotto might consider a little bonus for veteran cutman Joe Chavez, who was hired for this fight. Chavez held Cotto together long enough for the fighter to earn a split decision and then go to the hospital to receive 20 stitches.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

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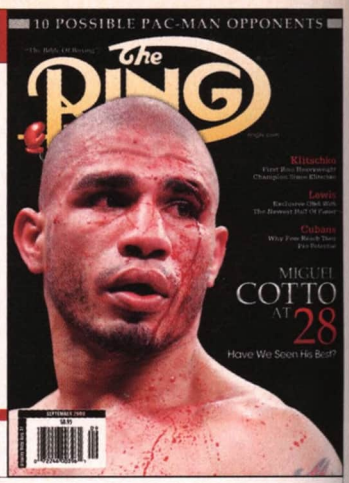

September 2009

Miguel Cotto by **Al Bello/Getty Images**
Cover Design by **Joseph Rogan**

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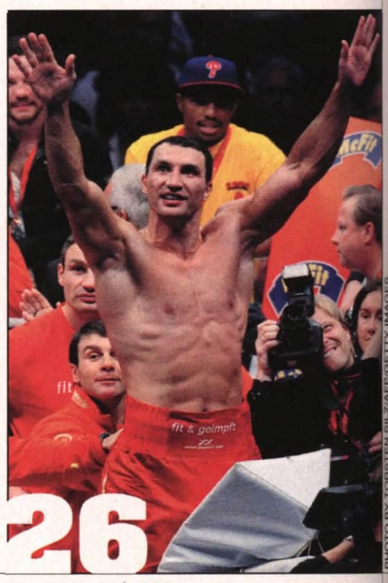

PHOTO BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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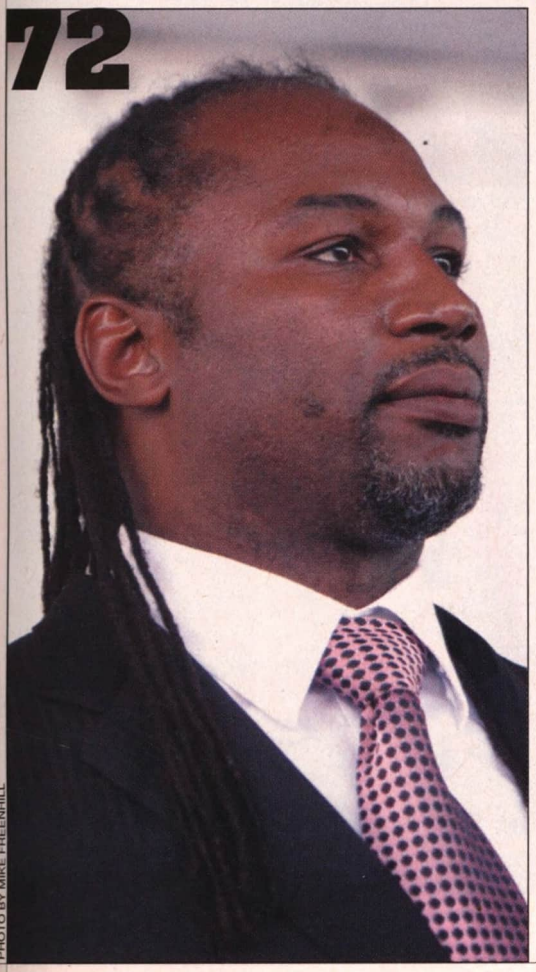

PHOTO BY MIKE FREENHILL

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Clubbing In L.A.

Los Angeles is a hot fight town without many worthy fight venues. Staples Center with its capacity of 20,000 takes care of the big, big cards, but small club shows generally end up in distant suburbs or casinos that sit in the desert beyond them.

So it may prove significant that Golden Boy Promotions initiated a new series of club shows, "Fight Night Club," in June at the edge of downtown L.A. The venue is a nightclub called Club Nokia that sits across the street from Staples.

For its debut Nokia sold standing room just below the ring for $28 and close-in balcony seating for more. Standing room at a fight is weird, but customers, many of whom appeared to be club regulars, didn't seem to mind. Standing around is one of the principal activities at nightclubs—along with drinking, dancing, mingling, and sometimes going home with people they didn't know when the evening started. Also, clubbers are used to slapping down hard cash at the door, so the admission prices didn't seem to bother anybody either.

All bouts were scheduled for four or six rounds, a choice that made for plenty of action. Several participants attracted sizeable groups of fans and friends, and they added plenty of electricity. The house fighters came out hard and did what they were supposed to do. Opponents tried to win and ultimately failed. But in the main event, Juan Garcia of Los Angeles showed plenty of spunk against Golden Boy's David Rodella of Oxnard, and may have won the lightweight contest. But two judges found five rounds for Rodella, giving him a split-decision victory.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Club Nokia housed a capacity crowd for **Fight Night Club's** *debut*

The promoter staged fights fast, with no lulls between them, and the card was carried by Versus and streamed free at THE RING's website, RingTV.com. Golden Boy partners Shane Mosley and Bernard Hopkins added star power to the audience. Ring card girls were suitably hot, as were their skimpy outfits.

If Golden Boy can bring a vibrant fight scene back to downtown L.A. and draw new, young fans, that's a positive circumstance that might be copied in other big towns. But plenty of predecessors have announced a new series of cards in the city center and limped away with a trail of losses.

—Ivan Goldman

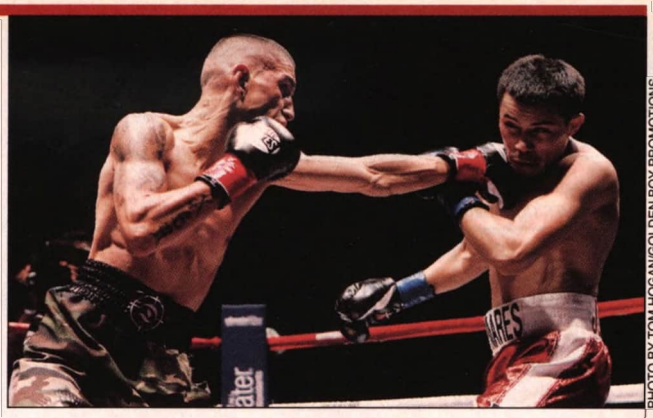


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Rodella stirred the Nokia crowd with a split-decision over Garcia

Resto Admits Truth In *Assault*

Throughout much of *Assault In The Ring,* an 83-minute documentary premiering August 1 on HBO, Luis Resto is shown wandering through his Bronx neighborhood, a cross between a swaggering old welterweight and Frankenstein's monster. Resto carries a heavy burden, having never lived down the scandalous 1983 bout where he fought Billy Collins Jr. with a pair of doctored gloves, leaving Collins blind and brutalized. A despairing Collins was later killed in a car crash that may have been a suicide. *Assault In The Ring*, directed and narrated by Eric Drath, is Resto's howl of remorse, for it was during the filming of this project that Resto finally revealed his role in the nasty affair.

Resto, it seems, was one of boxing's many lost boys, and his trainer, Carlos "Panama" Lewis, was his de facto father figure. Both served brief prison terms after the bout, but Lewis still maintains his innocence. He treats Resto with the sort of fake affection a street pimp might use to soothe a teen prostitute. Lewis is clearly the villain of the piece, mocking Resto behind his back, and forcing Drath to pay him for his time. Unfortunately, when Drath brings Resto and Lewis together for a confrontation, the fighter is too emotionally damaged to stand up to the slippery old trainer. That's probably how it was 26 years ago.

Resto lives with what he did to Billy Collins every day

At times, *Assault In The Ring* is frustrating—Resto mumbles and his memory seems faulty—but when Resto gradually leaks his confession, the movie becomes riveting. Viewers will be moved when an embarrassed Resto admits to his family that he knew his gloves were loaded and that the padding was cut out inside. But while Resto may be sympathetic, he's no hero. In fact, there are no heroes here. It's merely an ugly tale that grows uglier with each retelling.

—Don Stradley

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
05/22/09	Erislandy Lara KO 4 Edwin Vazquez	ESPN2	jm	C+	C	C-
Cuban's right hand is like plaster: If there's a hole, it fills it						
05/22/09	Antwone Smith W 10 Richard Gutierrez	ESPN2	w	C+	C+	C+
Second consecutive upset win on ESPN2 for 22-year-old dark horse						
05/30/09	Kermit Cintron W 12 Alfredo Angulo	HBO	jm	B+	B+	B
Cintron survives Angulo with movement and boxing skills						
05/30/09	Andre Berto W 12 Juan Urango	HBO	w	B+	B	C
Berto has the quickest clinch in boxing						
06/05/09	Ira Terry W 8 Leon Bobo	ESPN2	jl	C	C	C
Terry makes Bobo go bye-bye						
06/05/09	Carlos Molina W 12 Danny Perez	ESPN2	jm	C	C+	C
Judging by the empty seats, only people with televisions know who won						
06/11/09	Charles Huerta KO 3 Noe Lopez	Versus	f	C	B-	B-
Three knockdowns separate Lopez from his undefeated record						
06/11/09	Luis Ramos KO 5 Baudel Cardenas	Versus	l	C	C	C+
Kayo punch did not travel six inches						
06/12/09	Odlanier Solis KO 1 Dominique Alexander	Telemundo	h	C+	C	C-
A personal high for Solis—262 pounds his heaviest yet						
06/12/09	Diosbelys Hurtado W 12 Manuel Garnica	Telemundo	w	C+	C+	C+
Cuban is like a beginning typist: He hunts and pecks his way to wins						
06/12/09	Danny Garcia KO 2 Pavel Miranda	ESPN2	w	C	C+	B-
Miranda has now lost three of his last four via kayo						
06/12/09	Robert Guerrero KO 2 Efren Hinojosa	ESPN2	jl	B	C+	C+
Guerrero exorcises ghost by winning despite eye cut						
06/13/09	Miguel Cotto W 12 Joshua Clottey	HBO	w	A	A	A-
Cotto finishes stronger to earn nod in a bloody good fight						
06/19/09	Demetrius Andrade W 4 Tony Hirsch	ESPN	jm	C-	C	C-
Former Olympian goes the four-round distance for the first time						
06/19/09	Joe Greene W 8 Delray Raines	ESPN	m	C+	C	C
New York City prospect is not quite ready for prime time						
06/19/09	Fernando Beltran W 12 Monty Meza Clay	ESPN	f	B	B+	C+
Mexican pounds Clay with an average of 113 punches a round						
06/19/09	Troy Ross W 10 Michael Simms	Versus	c	B+	C	C+
Contender *champ keeps winning streak going against journeyman*						
06/19/09	Jean Pascal W 12 Adrian Diaconu	Versus	lh	A	A	A
Pascal's grit, not his glitz, won him a hard-fought decision						
06/20/09	**Wladimir Klitschko KO 10 Ruslan Chagaev**	**ESPN Classic**	**h**	**A+**	**A**	**C**
Jab-right hand, jab-right hand, jab-right hand, zzzzzzzzzzz						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

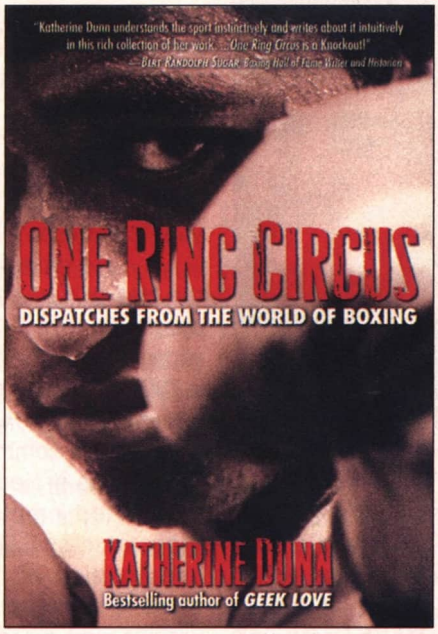
(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Boxing Bookshelf

Almost a decade before she won the National Book Award for her 1989 novel *Geek Love*, Katherine Dunn was a relatively unknown writer with a growing interest in boxing. She persuaded a Washington state weekly to publish her first fight article in 1981, and her gender was soon a non-issue. As she writes in her impressive new collection of boxing writing, "My vanity was soon flattened by the fight folk who didn't care whether I was a female, male, or a magenta-rumped baboon, as long as I got the job done."

One Ring Circus: Dispatches From The World Of Boxing (Schaffner Press, 252 pages, paperback, $16.95) entices the boxing aficionado in several ways. For one, it contains a series of carefully rendered recollections of the great rivalries of the 1980s. Of the era's greatest warriors, Dunn "liked Roberto Duran the best of all," and favored Hagler over Leonard. "I like Marvelous Marvin Hagler," she writes, "whose art could be entitled 'Zen And The Integrity Of The Working Man.' Hagler is saner than the mad Duran, less hysterical than the high-strung [Wilfred] Benitez."

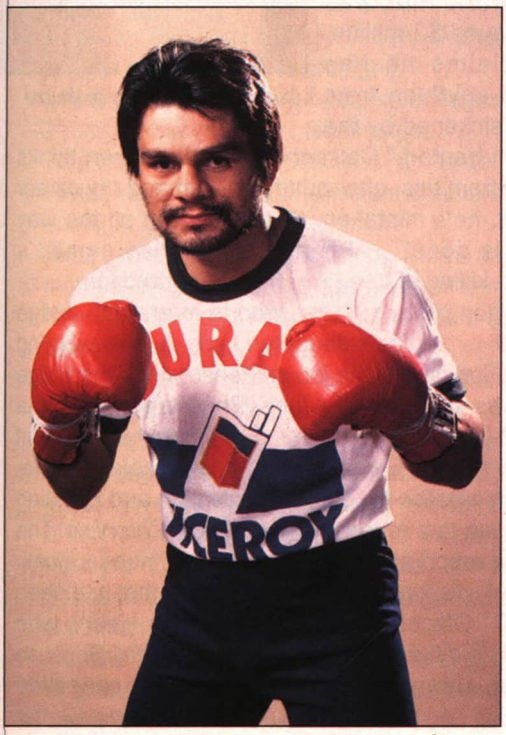


Dunn's writing can also provide fodder for arguments. One of her pieces is a defense of Mike Tyson published in the wake of his infamous second encounter with Evander Holyfield. "Tyson is being treated more viciously by the press and the public than any boxer in history—with the possible exceptions of Muhammad Ali in his anti-war, anti-white years, and Jack Johnson, who pissed off all the white folks by beating white fighters and marrying white women."

Lots of readers will probably say Tyson earned whatever bad press came his way, but that's why this book is worthwhile—Dunn has strong, well-informed opinions, and she's fun to read, whether you agree with her or not.

Dunn also covers the less glamorous aspects of the sport, with entries about the proper way to tape a fist. And though she loves the sport, she concedes that boxing has become "maligned, marginalized, and ignored, its practitioners are eager for anybody who might provide coverage." Which is why boxing definitely needs more writers like Dunn.

—Kevin Canfield



Duran was Dunn's favorite

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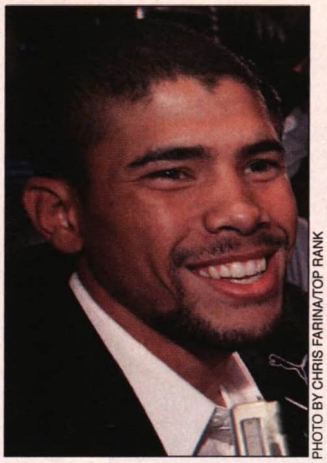

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Lopez: Special surprise

Cancer patient **Bryan Romero** received a very special gift for his 15th birthday, a surprise visit from junior featherweight contender **Juan Manuel Lopez**, who visited Romero at the Puerto Rico Medical Center. It was a birthday wish for Romero, who was left speechless when introduced to the smiling Lopez. As "Juanma" spoke to Romero, all the teenager could say was "I can't believe that you're here." Lopez stopped by to see Romero before heading to training camp in Cagaus. "It's something that I like to do when I can," Lopez said. "I have so much and all this kid wanted was to meet me. This is the least I can do for him." Lopez took some pictures with Romero, as well as with his nurses and doctors ... **Shane Mosley** received favorable news from the New York State Supreme Court Justice **Louis York** that his lawsuit against BALCO founder **Victor Conte** has not been dismissed. "Before I can decide anything, I have to decide if I have jurisdiction," York said in a published statement. "There's a lot of money in this case, and I'm not going to shortchange anyone." Mosley is contesting that Conte defamed him when it was suggest by Conte that the boxer knew perfectly well the materials he purchased were performance-enhancing drugs, rather than vitamins, as Mosley claims he was led to believe. Mosley's lawsuit complains that Conte made defamatory comments to major media outlets, including *USA Today*, SI.com, and the New York *Daily News*. **Judd Burstein**, Mosley's attorney, stated that "this is one step along the road of securing justice for Shane. Conte can run, but he cannot hide from me" ... Wedding bells rang out for former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson** for the third time, as he tied the knot with **Lakiha Spicer**. The marriage came in early-June, two weeks after "Iron Mike" tragically lost his four-year-old daughter **Exodus**, who was strangled by the cord of a treadmill. There were no guests at the Las Vegas ceremony. Tyson has kept himself in the public eye with a cameo appearance in the wildly popular summer comedy *The Hangoever*. Tyson was previously married for one year to actress **Robin Givens** and five years to **Dr. Monica Turner**. He retired from boxing in 2005 and is eligible for the Hall of Fame next year ... World junior welterweight champion **Manny Pacquiao** will be investing some of his winnings with the poor in southern Philippines. The goal is a 700-acre property that would include the development of a tourism complex, a medical tourism park, hotels, resorts, a retirement community, and information technology park. The cost is projected to be $1.2-billion and is supposed to provide employment to thousands of Filipinos. The construction of the project alone is being counted on to provide work for thousands of skilled and unskilled laborers ... The feud between **Joe Calzaghe** and promoter **Frank Warren** continues. THE RING's former light heavyweight and super middleweight world champion won a judgment in early-2009 against Warren's Sports Network that was reportedly around $2-million. Calzaghe claims he has not received anything from Warren. "I'm sickened by the way I've been treated," Calzaghe said. "If Warren thinks I'll walk away from this, after putting myself and my career record at risk, he's mistaken. I'll pursue him all the way until justice is done" ... Philadelphia police named a suspect in the killing of **Joe Frazier**'s step grandson, **Peter Lyde Jr.**, the son of **Peter Lyde**, who is married to Judge **Jacqui Frazier-Lyde**, Joe's daughter. Lyde Jr. was working security in his first day on the job at Pleasures on the Ridge Tavern and was shot. In early-June, Philadelphia issued a warrant for 32-year-old **Rodney Evans** ... Light heavyweight contender **Chris Henry** was tasered and arrested in late-May by Houston police for public intoxication and resisting arrest, according to a report in the *Houston Chronicle*. The Orange Police report states that Henry "continued to jump around and yell, displaying signs of someone that had been smoking PCP." Officers were forced to taser Henry, who reportedly put up a fight as they tried to arrest him. Because of this ordeal, Henry, 23-2 (18), had a fight cancelled against **Ross Thompson** set for June 4 at the Civic Center in Humble, Texas.

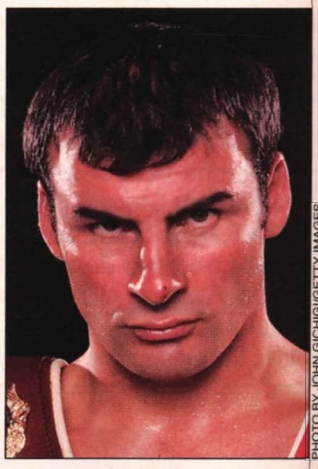

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe: Still waiting on Warren

Quotable

"God answered my prayers. There have been a lot of people wanting to see me fight at home since I won my first championship."

—WBC junior welterweight titleholder Timothy Bradley on fighting Nate Campbell at the Agua Caliente Casino, Rancho Mirage, California, 10 minutes away from where Bradley grew up

"70-30. We're not supposed to be going backwards."

—Freddie Roach, Manny Pacquiao's trainer, on what the purse split should be in favor of his fighter for a proposed fall showdown with Miguel Cotto.

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended June 21, 2009

Heavyweights: Wladimir Klitschko (first last issue) becomes the first RING world heavyweight champion since 2004 with his victory over third-rated Ruslan Chagaev. The change shakes up the landscape, moving Vitali Klitschko (second last issue) to one, and Alexander Povetkin (fourth last issue) to two. Everyone rated five to 10 moves up one slot, creating an opening for Denis Boytsov.

Cruiserweights: No changes.

Light Heavyweights: Jean Pascal enters at eight after beating Adrian Diaconu (eighth last issue) in a very close fight. Diaconu drops to nine and Hugo Garay (ninth last issue) exits after being upset by unranked Gabriel Campillo.

Super Middleweights: No changes.

Middleweights: Javier Castillejo (eighth last issue) has retired, allowing Amin Askiinen (ninth last issue) and Anthony Mundine (10th last issue) to advance one place each. Daniel Geale, who lost to Mundine by close decision, re-enters at 10.

Junior Middleweights: Based on his strong performance against previously undefeated Alfredo Angulo, Kermit Cintron debuts at 10. Cintron replaces Joachim Alcine.

Welterweights: Joshua Clottey (fourth last issue) switches with Antonio Margarito (fifth last issue) after Clottey's split-decision loss to Miguel Cotto.

Junior Welterweights: No changes.

Lightweights: No changes.

Junior Lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior Featherweights: Israel Vazquez relinquished the RING's world junior featherweight championship to campaign at featherweight.

Bantamweights: Yonnhy Perez upset Silence Mabuza (fourth last issue), jumping into the number-four slot and moving everyone rated four through nine down one place each. Perez' inclusion forces Gerry Penalosa out at 10.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: No changes.

Junior Flyweights: Rodel Mayol enters at 10 (replacing Edren Dapudong) after fighting to a sixth-round technical draw against RING junior flyweight world champion Ivan Calderon.

Strawweights: Muhammad Rachman (sixth last issue) lost for the third time in his last four fights, this time to third-rated Oleydong Sithsamerchai. Everyone rated seven to 10 moves up one place and Rachman slides down to 10.

Pound-for-pound: Cotto (seventh last issue) slips to nine, enabling Donaire (eighth last issue) and Vic Darchinyan (ninth last issue) to each move up one slot. Cotto simply didn't look like the seventh-best pound-for-pound fighter in the world in barely beating Clottey.

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Welterweight
2. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
3. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
4. **Shane Mosley**
   Welterweight
5. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
6. **Rafael Marquez**
   Junior Featherweight
7. **Nonito Donaire**
   Flyweight
8. **Vic Darchinyan**
   Junior Bantamweight
9. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
10. **Celestino Caballero**
    Junior Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **ringtv.com**

[The Ring Ratings]

For Period Ended June 21, 2009

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at ringtv.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

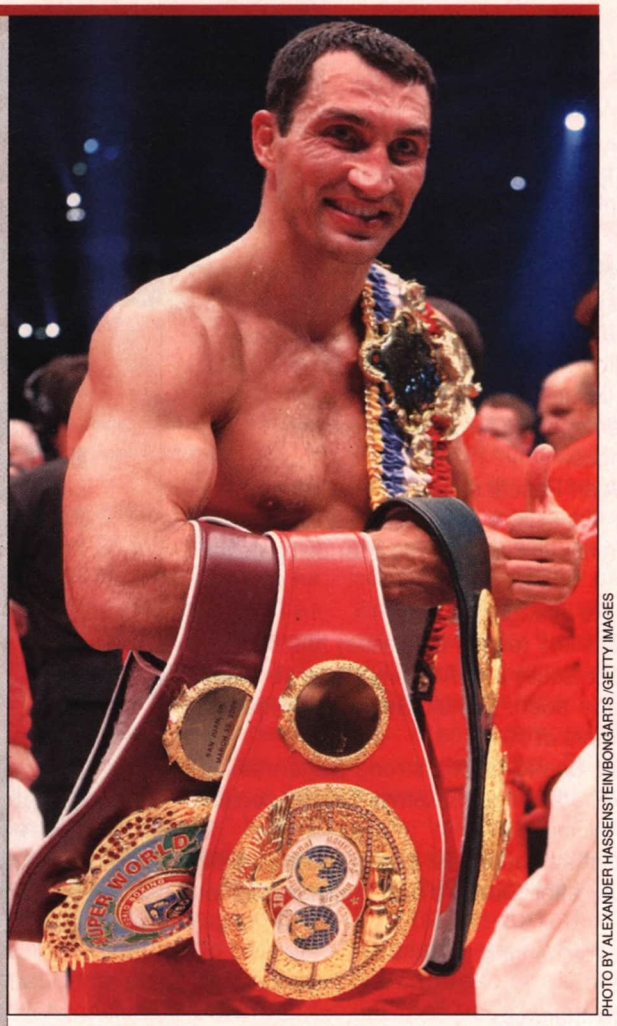

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS /GETTY IMAGES

Wladimir Klitschko becomes the first RING heavyweight world champion since his brother Vitali last held the title in 2004

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 53-3 (47)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 37-2 (36)
2. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia 17-0 (12)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV**
Uzbekistan 25-1-1 (17)
4. **NICOLAY VALUEV**
Russia 50-1 (34)
5. **EDDIE CHAMBERS**
Philadelphia, PA 34-1 (18)
6. **CHRIS ARREOLA**
Riverside, CA 27-0 (24)
7. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO**
Ukraine 29-0 (19)
8. **DAVID HAYE**
England 22-1 (21)
9. **JOHN RUIZ**
Chelsea, MA 43-8-1 (29)
10. **DENIS BOYTSOV**
Russia 25-0 (20)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 37-1 (27)
2. **VERNON FORREST**
Atlanta, GA 41-3 (29)
3. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 37-5 (11)
4. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Belize 42-12-1 (21)
5. **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
Argentina 44-1-2 (24)
6. **SERGIO MORA**
Los Angeles, CA 21-1-1 (5)
7. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK**
Ukraine 36-0 (22)
8. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 32-3-1 (23)
9. **JAMES KIRKLAND**
Austin, TX 25-0 (22)
10. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 31-2-1 (27)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 42-0-2 (22)
2. **STEVEN LUEVANO**
La Puente, CA 36-1-1 (15)
3. **JORGE SOLIS**
Mexico 37-1-2 (27)
4. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 28-4 (20)
5. **HIROYUKI ENOKI**
Japan 28-1-2 (20)
6. **MARIO SANTIAGO**
Puerto Rico 19-1-1 (14)
7. **MARTIN HONORIO**
Mexico 25-4-1 (13)
8. **TAKAHIRO AOH**
Japan 17-1-1 (8)
9. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ**
Mexico 38-11-1 (23)
10. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA**
Cuba 15-0 (13)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 38-5 (34)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama 32-2 (22)
3. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 25-0 (23)
4. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM**
Thailand 38-1 (27)
5. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON**
Mexico 36-2 (31)
6. **STEVE MOLITOR**
Canada 28-1 (11)
7. **BERNARD DUNNE**
Ireland 28-1 (15)
8. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 34-4-3 (21)
9. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
Panama 34-2-2 (21)
10. **JHONNY GONZALEZ**
Mexico 40-7 (34)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
Japan 26-2 (10)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
Panama 25-1-1 (8)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO**
Ukraine 21-2-2 (7)
4. **YONNHY PEREZ**
Colombia 19-0 (14)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 22-3 (18)
6. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
Ghana 26-1 (22)
7. **ABNER MARES**
Mexico 18-0 (11)
8. **NEHOMAR CERMENO**
Venezuela 17-0 (10)
9. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 27-3 (20)
10. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 39-2-1 (29)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: TOMASZ ADAMEK
Poland 37-1 (25)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 21-2 (11)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 41-2-1 (31)
3. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 36-3-2 (28)
4. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
Italy 26-1-1 (10)
5. **MARCO HUCK**
Yugoslavia 25-1 (20)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 29-4-1 (18)
7. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 26-1-1 (19)
8. **TROY ROSS**
Canada 22-1 (15)
9. **OLA AFOLABI**
England 14-1-3 (6)
10. **MATT GODFREY**
Providence, RI 18-1 (10)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 49-5-1 (32)
2. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 28-0 (17)
3. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 49-12-2 (33)
4. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 30-0 (17)
5. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 27-6 (19)
6. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 53-5 (39)
7. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 42-4-1 (24)
8. **JEAN PASCAL**
Haiti 23-1 (15)
9. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Romania 26-1 (15)
10. **YUSAF MACK**
Philadelphia, PA 28-2-2 (17)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 41-1 (31)
2. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Romania 24-0 (19)
3. **CARL FROCH**
England 25-0 (21)
4. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 28-2 (21)
5. **SAKIO BIKA**
Cameroon 27-3-2 (17)
6. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 28-1 (20)
7. **KAROLY BALZSAY**
Hungary 21-0 (15)
8. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 28-3-1 (17)
9. **ANDRE WARD**
Oakland, CA 19-0 (12)
10. **DENIS INKIN**
Russia 34-1 (24)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 35-1 (31)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Armenia 29-0 (23)
2. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 32-2-1 (14)
3. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 30-3 (15)
4. **KHOREN GEVOR**
Armenia 30-3 (16)
5. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 37-1 (27)
6. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
Louisville, KY 24-2-3 (12)
7. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 38-12 (23)
8. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 26-2 (17)
9. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 36-3 (23)
10. **DANIEL GEALE**
Australia 21-1 (13)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 46-5 (39)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 34-1 (27)
3. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Ghana 35-3 (20)
4. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 37-6 (27)
5. **ANDRE BERTO**
Winter Haven, FL 25-0 (19)
6. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
Puerto Rico 26-2 (20)
7. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 29-4 (14)
8. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 37-6 (25)
9. **ISAAC HLATSWAYO**
South Africa 28-1-1 (10)
10. **VYACHESLAV SENCHENKO**
Ukraine 29-0 (20)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 49-3-2 (37)

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
Palm Springs, CA 24-0 (11)
2. **RICKY HATTON**
England 45-2 (32)
3. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 37-2-2 (22)
4. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Ukraine 31-2-1 (13)
5. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 26-2 (5)
6. **JUAN URANGO**
Colombia 21-2-1 (16)
7. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 25-3 (13)
8. **RICARDO TORRES**
Colombia 33-2 (29)
9. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
Cameroon 17-3 (9)
10. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
Argentina 25-1 (24)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 50-4-1 (37)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 34-2 (17)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Cuba 36-4-1 (22)
3. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 25-0 (25)
4. **ROLANDO REYES**
Mexico 31-4-2 (20)
5. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 25-2 (21)
6. **ALI FUNEKA**
South Africa 30-2-2 (25)
7. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 21-2 (14)
8. **BREIDIS PRESCOTT**
Colombia 21-0 (18)
9. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 28-0 (19)
10. **AMIR KHAN**
England 20-1 (15)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 48-7-2 (31)
2. **MALCOLM KLASSEN**
South Africa 24-4-2 (15)
3. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 28-4 (11)
4. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
Puerto Rico 22-0-1 (13)
5. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 36-4-1 (19)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-4-1 (34)
7. **JORGE LINARES**
Venezuela 26-0 (17)
8. **NICKY COOK**
England 29-2 (16)
9. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
Gilroy, CA 23-1-1 (16)
10. **SERGEY GULYAKEVICH**
Belarus 26-1 (12)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Armenia 32-1-1 (26)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 32-3 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 13-1 (8)
4. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 29-2-2 (16)
5. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 51-5-1 (39)
6. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-4-1 (9)
7. **KOHEI KONO**
Japan 23-4 (8)
8. **DAIKI KAMEDA**
Japan 14-1 (10)
9. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 30-5-1 (22)
10. **SIMPHIWE NONGQAYI**
South Africa 15-0 (6)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
Philippines 21-1 (14)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 35-2-3 (22)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 72-3-1 (38)
4. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 47-1-1 (20)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 29-0-2 (18)
6. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 34-5-2 (15)
7. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 20-0 (13)
8. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
South Africa 23-2 (16)
9. **BERNARD INOM**
France 19-1-1 (10)
10. **JULIO CESAR MIRANDA**
Mexico 29-4-1 (22)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 32-0-1 (6)

1. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 25-2 (15)
2. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 36-5 (20)
3. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Mexico 20-1-1 (16)
4. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 28-2-2 (20)
5. **CESAR CANCHILA**
Colombia 27-2 (21)
6. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 28-3-1 (11)
7. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
Philippines 46-12-7 (22)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 24-2 (10)
9. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 19-1 (10)
10. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 25-3-1 (19)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 23-0 (20)
2. **RAUL GARCIA**
Mexico 26-0-1 (16)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 31-0 (12)
4. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 23-4-1 (20)
5. **MILAN MELINDO**
Philippines 18-0 (5)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 23-3 (9)
7. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 24-1-3 (14)
8. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
South Africa 19-0 (15)
9. **JUAN PALACIOS**
Nicaragua 26-2 (21)
10. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 62-8-5 (31)

By Jeff Ryan

A Loss Like No Other

It's always been difficult for me to feel sorry for Mike Tyson, no matter what his situation. And the reasons go deeper than my usual lack of sympathy for multimillionaires, be they bumbling CEOs fired from major corporations or athletes whose foul-ups have cost their teams playoff games.

Tyson has managed, through the years, to be a most unsympathetic figure. He has squandered athletic skills and financial rewards the rest of us couldn't even dream of possessing, turning worldwide fame into infamy. "Leg-Iron" Mike has done time for rape and, having recently called his victim a "swine," proved that he is no less contrite these days than he was when he was playfully shaking his handcuffs at the TV cameras and smirking on his way to the slammer.

We're talking about someone who boasted of the terror he inflicted as a youth running the streets of Brownsville, Brooklyn, engaging in everything from mugging the elderly to knocking unconscious a sanitation worker who tried to dispose of one of young Tyson's beloved pigeon coops. In the ring, Tyson could be truly brilliant or frighteningly barbaric. He bit off a chunk of Evander Holyfield's ear, tried to break Frans Botha's arm, and took great delight in demeaning a beaten Tyrell Biggs by saying that his bodyshots made the vanquished scream like a woman.

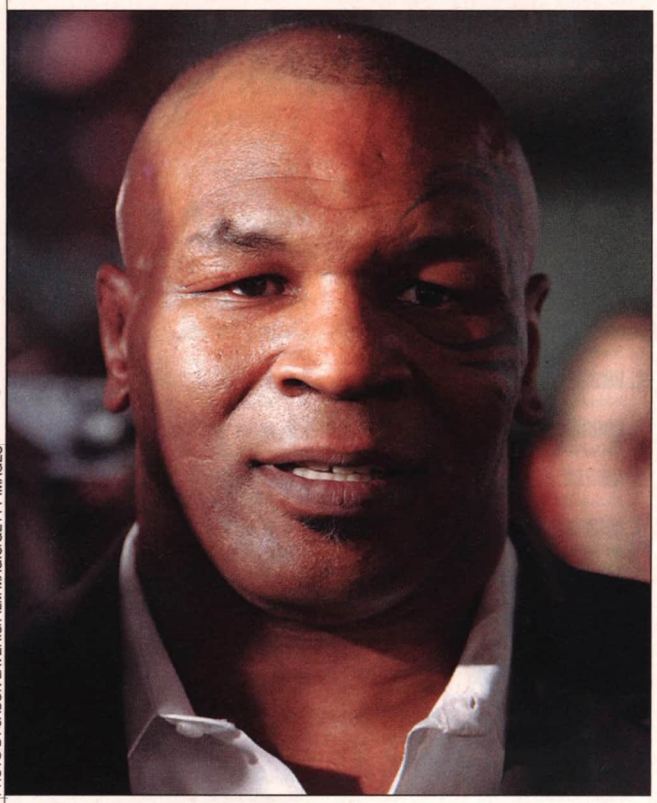

PHOTO BY JASON LAVERIS/FILM MAGIC/GETTY IMAGES

Tyson has suffered the ultimate tragedy

Tyson dedicated fights to "rappers," talked of wanting to eat Lennox Lewis' children and stomp on the testicles of media members' offspring, and referred to Jim Jacobs and Bill Cayton, the Caucasian managers who helped make him an obscenely wealthy household name, as "slave masters." And, of course, there was that unforgettable press conference during which Tyson seemed to become completely unhinged, grabbing his crotch while unleashing a barrage of homophobic slurs on a "white boy" reporter.

Ah yes, *that* Mike Tyson, the guy we thought was so mature beyond his years when he was 20 years old and answering our interview questions with the polish of a 20-year veteran. In many ways, he has gotten what he's deserved: clueless buffoons with water balloons working his corner on the night he needed a battle plan against Buster Douglas, a stint in prison, and a contractual obligation to the Chief Egregiousness Officer of Don King Productions. What goes around comes around.

And then came the day of May 26, 2009. And Tyson, who has had so little in common with the mainstream world for the past quarter of a century, who has been disconnected from reality in so many ways since he first threw a punch for a paycheck, joined a crowded club whose members have been sentenced to walk around for the rest of their lives with hearts heavier than a punching bag, never knowing when the tears are going to flow at the most inopportune moment or if an otherwise sunny day is going to be suddenly turned dark by a daydream, the mention of a name, or a glance at a wallet photo.

Mike Tyson became another parent who has lost a young child.

On May 25, while Tyson was away in Las Vegas, the ex-champ's four-year-old daughter, Exodus, got her neck entangled in a power cord that was dangling from a treadmill in Tyson's Arizona home. She was given CPR and rushed to the hospital, but she died the next day.

The words, "Mike Tyson ..." leading off the news scroll at the bottom of my television screen had me anticipating some sort of run-in with the law or crazy publicity stunt, but when word of the tragedy in his home unfolded, it quickly filled me with compassion for him. He ceased being another spoiled athlete, street thug, or weirdo with a tattoo on his face. He'd become someone to pray for, to try and empathize with, and to

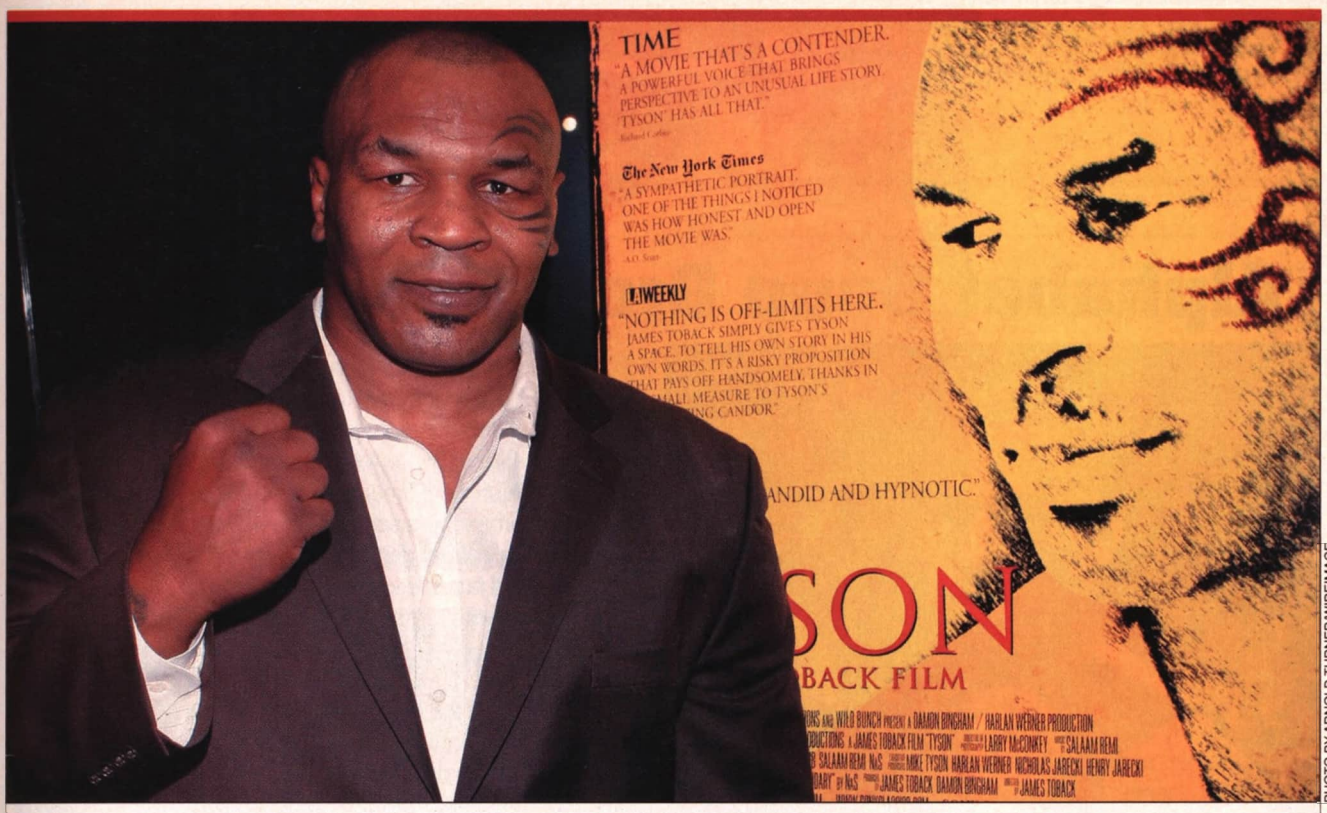

PHOTO BY ARNOLD TURNER/WIREIMAGE

The former heavyweight champ poses with a poster at the Los Angeles premier of Tyson

hope wouldn't unravel in some way that he has or hasn't before. For the first time since we'd talked one day about 21 years ago in the locker room of a New Jersey gym, an afternoon during which he'd revealed a sharp wit and initiated plenty of mental sparring, he ceased being a mythological figure, a punchline, or a brand. He was humanized.

It's said that a parent whose child dies is never the same again, that something breaks inside that can't be repaired. You wonder what this is going to do to Tyson and how it will change him. Ten days after Exodus' passing, he got married for the third time, saying his vows with girlfriend Lakiha Spicer in a low-key ceremony in Las Vegas. Maybe the marriage is a need for more closeness and structure in his time of grief. Or, perhaps, we boxing columnists should just shut up and leave the psychological analysis to the guys with the degrees on their walls and the couches in their offices.

In the recently released documentary, *Tyson*, the former "Kid Dynamite" showed some signs that he may be mellowing a bit with age. With his scowl on the shelf and his gut encroaching on his waistband, he doesn't look so menacing these days. Though he tossed around hyphenated curse words like they were combinations rattling the speedbag throughout the flick, Tyson appeared downright domesticated playing with his kids. He hasn't had an encounter with the law since a 2007 cocaine bust and subsequent rehab, and had been happily out of the headlines for a while. He even has a cameo in the new summer film, *The Hangover*. Self-deprecation seems to come easier to him these days than it ever has.

No less a free spirit/nut job than Madonna reinvented herself in the most unexpected way possible a few years ago. After changing stage personas, hairstyles, and wardrobes in every way imaginable for most of her career, and following regrettable episodes like cursing repeatedly through an interview with David Letterman, she morphed into a laid-back, responsible, normal-looking, middle-aged wife and mother. No more bejeweled bustier, snow-white hair, cigar smoking, or nudie coffee table books.

Is it excessive wishful thinking bordering on insanity to hope that a Tyson chastened by the graying of his stubble and given perspective through the sorrow his family now deals with, can reinvent himself as a husband, father, and wise old ex-heavyweight champion? He'll be enshrined in Canastota in the near future, and as someone who so reveres ring history, you wonder what effect that will have on him. Will we ever see the day when Tyson no longer feels the need to impress the crowd he has always unconvincingly claimed he left behind on the street corner and in prison?

Yeah, he's *Mike Tyson*, but if he's walking and talking better in his 60s than Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier are now, could he ever become the elder statesman boxing has long craved but can't ever seem to identify? Odder things have occurred.

According to many who observed his upbringing and wild prime, including Tyson himself, he wasn't expected to make it this far, to the age of 43. But he's here and now carrying a burden no one should ever have to bear. It's the one loss you don't come back from, the one you relive constantly and second-guess yourself about forever. The "baddest man on the planet" is today the saddest man on the planet. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Alphabet Soup Grows Colder

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Dawson ditches alphabet strap to fight rematch with Johnson

Junior welter champ Manny Pacquiao, recognized by just about everybody as the greatest fighter in the world, owns no major alphabet belts and doesn't appear to be losing any sleep over it. A couple of decades ago, this would have been a striking circumstance. Back then, networks, promoters, and managers spent far more time and attention trying to steer the alphabet gangs' fishy pronouncements their way. Networks paid fatter fees if titles were at stake and might even refuse to buy what promised to be excellent matches if no belts were involved.

But over time TV networks learned that they, not the alphabet bandits, are the big dogs in the fight kennel. Promoters, managers, and fighters are often more interested in pleasing them than alphabet gangs. The math is simple. Networks pay fees. Alphabet gangs demand fees.

So no one was terribly surprised when Chad Dawson surrendered his IBF belt rather than defend it against barely known mandatory challenger Tavoris Cloud, 19-0 (18). HBO offered a more lucrative deal for Dawson to fight a sequel against Glen Johnson instead, cinching Dawson's choice. He also avoided paying a hefty "sanctioning fee" to the New Jersey-based IBF.

Vacating a belt was nothing new to Dawson. Earlier, he'd given up the WBC title to take on Antonio Tarver, and by beating him, made himself an even more saleable commodity. As for Cloud, who fights out of Tallahassee, Florida, while he's thus far unrated by this magazine, he did stop Mike Wood and Julio Gonzalez in his last two contests, which means there may be more to him than HBO thinks. Networks mostly want some *other* network to find out if a guy's got the goods. Ultra-suspicion is a legacy from the days when then-pliant HBO routinely paid Roy Jones to defend his clutch of titles against a string of cops, construction workers, and other day-jobbers. In today's climate, Jones would have to take such contests down the street.

Lots of people in the fight game were already fed up with corrupt alphabet gangs and their conflicting rulings when THE RING decided to go around them and re-establish its own championships in 2002. The magazine neither demands nor accepts sanctioning fees. Fans prefer having one champion in each division and were quicker to take to RING titles than promoters and managers who'd learned how to manipulate the old system.

Then, in 2007, a subsidiary of Golden Boy Enterprises, which also owns Golden Boy Promotions, bought THE RING. Other promoters were dismayed, and it's understandable when you consider how *they* might have acted under the same cir-

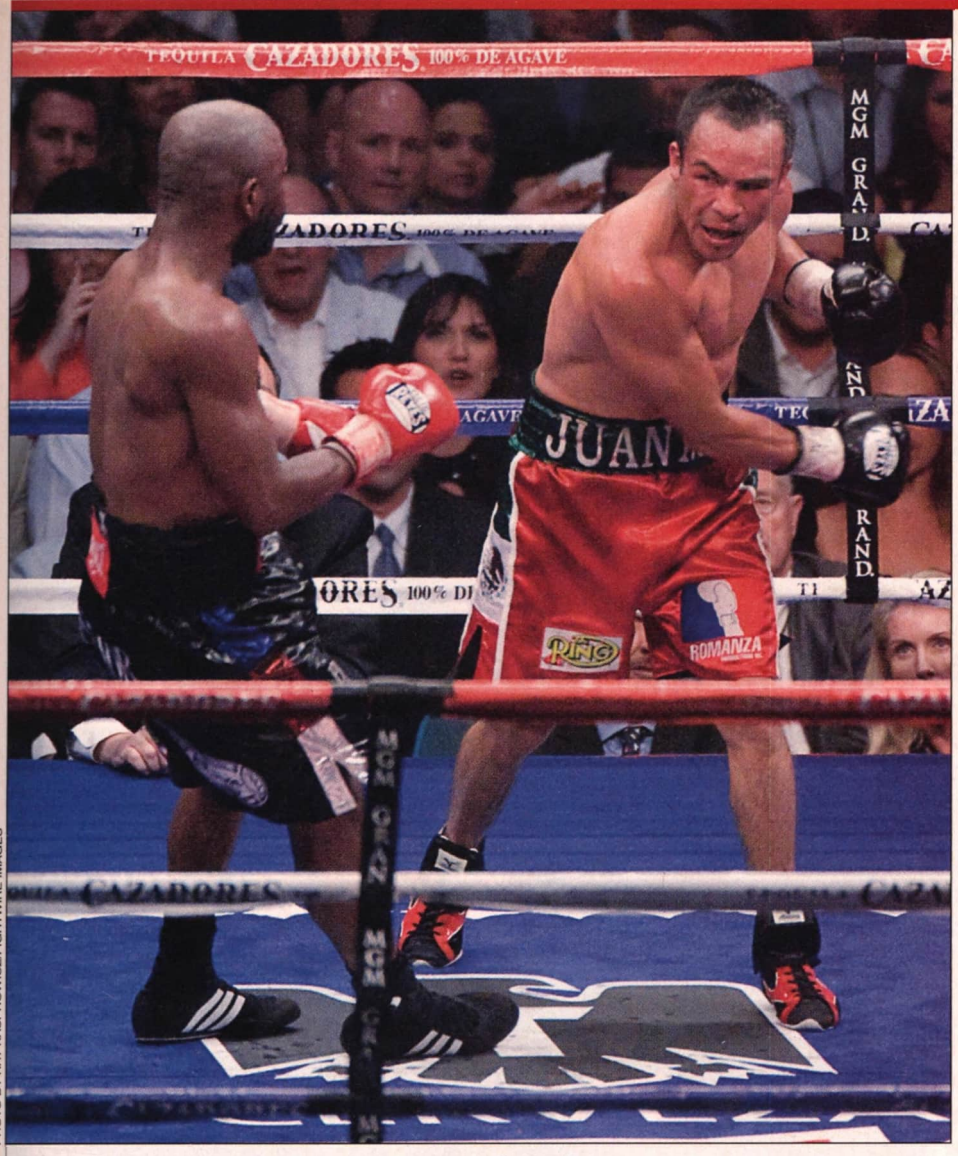

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Marquez is the only current Ring champion promoted by Golden Boy

cumstances. If Don King owned this magazine, wouldn't he bend articles, rankings, and everything his way? You can bet on it. But Golden Boy CEO Richard Schaefer said from the get-go that if the promotion arm of Golden Boy influenced rankings or editorial decisions, it would transform the magazine into a company newsletter and the Ring franchise would become a worthless asset. So the firm that runs this magazine, Sports and Entertainment Publications, operates independently. I have never, to my knowledge, received instructions directly or indirectly from Schaefer, Golden Boy's principal owner Oscar De La Hoya, or anyone else at Golden Boy. In fact, like a Little League coach who's got a kid on the team, I've been harder on Oscar *because* of our indirect connection. Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins confirms that neither he nor anyone he employs has received an editorial directive from Golden Boy.

The only Golden Boy fighter to hold a Ring belt is Juan Manuel Marquez, who won the lightweight championship last year when he stopped champion Joel Casamayor. The promoter with the most Ring champions is Bob Arum's Top Rank—Pacquiao at 140 pounds, Kelly Pavlik at 160, and Ivan Calderon at 108. Pacquiao is also at the top of the pound-for-pound rankings.

None of the promoters who expect The Ring to shape ratings Golden Boy's way has been able to point to one such instance, with the exception of Gary Shaw, who complained Bernard Hopkins owns the light heavyweight title because he's a Golden Boy partner. Trouble is, Hopkins doesn't *have* the Ring title.

HBO and Showtime have set a policy of not mentioning Ring ratings or champions, so they actually treat us even worse than the thoroughly discredited alphabet gangs. Sometimes their on-camera teams have to twist themselves into verbal pretzels to avoid our ratings. I rather enjoy these moments. Watch for them. An exception is ESPN and its contractor Bottom Line, which puts together the "crawl" at the bottom of the screen. They use The Ring ratings and label them as such.

The magazine is better off with an owner that actually cares about boxing and respects Ring's storied history. But as trainer Naazim Richardson once put it, "I trust my brother, but when he hands me money I count it." So as Ring championships gain in stature, fans should keep one eye on the networks and another on this magazine. I suggest you use your other two eyes to watch the fights.

Fights On The Internet: Various promoters have for the last few years tried to build profits by offering fights on the Internet at cut-rate pay-per-view prices. Anecdotal evidence tells me technical snags often plague the practice. But cyber-nerds will no doubt polish their crude technology, possibly making Internet pay-per-view more of a factor. The RingTV.com popped the cork on an interesting freebie when in June it streamed the debut of a new monthly club show out of Los Angeles for free. The show was also available on Versus.

You don't have to be a wizard to notice that Internet, MP3, TV, video games, and even home-alarm systems are merging into one mega-media force. Increasing numbers of people will walk the streets with electronic gizmos fastened to their heads that put them in touch with sports events, news, stock quotes,

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

David Rodela decisions Juan Garcia in a bout streamed live on RingTV.com

pizza joints, *American Idol*, and satellite directions to their favorite electronics store so they can upgrade techno-junk and lose themselves deeper in their artificial world.

With networks such as Telefutura pulling back from the fight game, it's not getting any easier for promoters to rope in networks. Internet showings, if they fatten fight purses and keep prices low, may be an alternate course worth pursuing, though like many of us, I much prefer to see over-the-air networks climb back into the ring.

The Two Andres: Bid farewell to Andre Ward the prospect and greet Andre Ward the crafty pro who handles whatever's in front of him. His polished performance against heavy-handed, headbutting Edison Miranda definitely earned him a fistic graduate degree, though let's face it, at 168 pounds, he's working in a terribly dangerous neighborhood. A bout between Ward and Carl Froch looks likely, so we desperately need Lucian Bute to face Mikkel Kessler in a four-man elimination tournament. That could elevate super middleweights into almost the same rarefied air breathed by welterweights. If the alphabet gangs don't like the idea, I suggest they hold their breath until I give in to them.

Incidentally, Steve Farhood and Nick Charles, regarded by Showtime as its second-string announcing team, is at this point probably more solid than starters Al Bernstein and Gus Johnson. Full disclosure: I count Farhood as a personal friend, but I thought the *ShoBox* team working in a rare Saturday night slot made all the right moves calling the Ward-Miranda action and pinpointing and discussing what was significant *without boring us*. "Behind the numbers" and other exclusive *ShoBox* features worked just as well for a bigger contest. A coach way ahead on points can take guys off the bench (Farhood and Charles), but he can't tell them not to score.

Now, about that other Andre—Berto. He comes to fight, has great speed, and mixes up his combinations, but to prevail at the top levels of the very, very tough welterweight division, he'll need to develop an inside game. The less polished Ricky Hatton had an easier fight against Juan Urango than Berto did because the "Hit Man" offers no free lunches in close. As it stands now, I'd favor Hatton over Berto. "Styles make fights" is more than just a cliché.

PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREZMA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Ward graduated from the prospect class with Miranda victory

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Berto beat Urango, but lacks inside game

Shutting Out Russell: California officials are tying themselves in knots to avoid making referee Pat Russell executive officer of the athletic commission. When he was a finalist for the position more than three years ago, the powers-that-be opted instead for Armando Garcia, a smooth talker from Florida who was eventually forced to resign over a sexual harassment claim. Then when it looked like Russell was finally going to get the position, the state ignored its own deadlines and stalled out completely on the new search.

The state's boxing bureaucracy is so screwed up that when Shane Mosley's trainer discovered plaster in one of Antonio Margarito's wraps, the inspector resisted re-examining the other fist because he'd already signed it. Of course it turned out to be loaded too.

Meanwhile, Arum has so far stuck to his word and scheduled no shows in California while his pet weasel Margarito remains suspended. Arum is seeking to trivialize the worst scandal in boxing since Panama Lewis and James Resto were imprisoned in New York for removing padding from Resto's gloves against Billy Collins. Without strong leadership, don't be surprised if the commission re-licenses Margarito, flashing a green light to slippery psychopaths everywhere. ■

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Russell (cautioning Rafael Marquez) deserves a crack at running the California commission

2009 International Boxing Hall of Fame Induction Weekend

PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Class picture: The living members of the 2009 Hall of Fame induction class pose with their rings. From left to right, the new Hall of Famers are Brian Mitchell, Hugh McIlvaney, Lennox Lewis, Larry Merchant, Orlando Canizales, and Bob Goodman. Or, described another way, the new Hall of Famers are Lennox Lewis and five short dudes who barely come up to his shoulder.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Canizales' defense isn't what it used to be, as he walks directly into a left hand to the nose from ... himself. The former bantamweight champ got quite emotional during his induction speech and had to fight back the tears, but Canizales has never been short on resilience or stamina, so he persevered and finished the speech on his feet.

PHOTO BY STEVE SAMOVEDNY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Intent on one-upping George Foreman and his infamous exhibition from 1975, former lightweight titlist Livingstone Bramble took on five opponents in Canastota and beat them with his back turned. Actually, as part of the Induction Weekend festivities, Bramble led a friendly boxing clinic, teaching the fans some moves.

PHOTO BY STEVE SAMOVEDNY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Displaying his famous hat and cigar that should someday be in a display case in the Hall of Fame museum, 2005 inductee Bert Sugar signs copies of his books while enjoying the festive weekend. No word on whether the former Ring *editor-in-chief got permission from the current* Ring *editor-in-chief, Nigel Collins, to use his trademark finger-point in "Camera Clicks."*

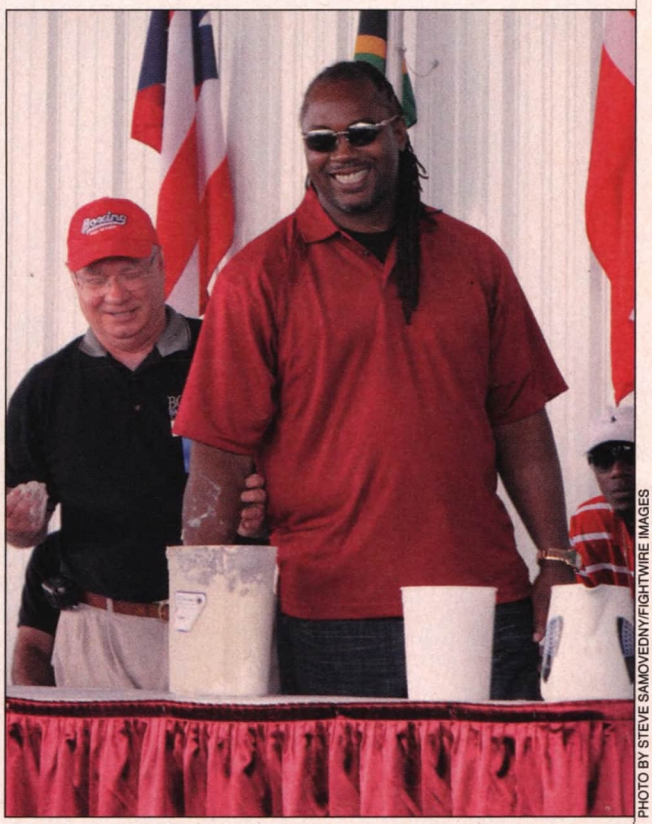

PHOTO BY STEVE SAMOVEDNY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The right hand that accounted for some of the most memorable heavyweight knockouts of modern times will now reside permanently in Canastota, thanks to Lewis dipping his favored fist in plaster for molding purposes. By the way, how uncomfort able will it be if Antonio Margarito ever takes a trip to the IBHOF and is asked to do this?

By Brian Doogan

Nathan Cleverly Light Heavyweight

Apart from sitting under a tree one day and being hit on the head by an apple, which prompted his "eureka" moment and established the law of gravity, Sir Isaac Newton is not renowned for having placed himself too often in harm's way, while the closest Pythagoras ever came to conflict was as a hapless prisoner of war when Persia invaded Egypt. Nathan Cleverly, then, is a different breed of mathematician.

Three days after sitting for an exam in Numerical Solutions of Elliptic Differential Equations, just one module in a four-year mathematics degree course he is taking at Cardiff University, the 22-year-old from Cefn Fforest, Wales, defended his Commonwealth light heavyweight title against Billy Boyle at York Hall in Bethnal Green, London. If apples had been part of the equation, Boyle would have been on the receiving end of the whole orchard, but Cleverly accomplished the job with a solid jab, heavy right crosses, and several well-placed uppercuts before stopping his opponent from Sheffield in the second round. It was his 16th successive win. By the time he graduates in June 2010, Cleverly hopes to be on the verge of a world title shot.

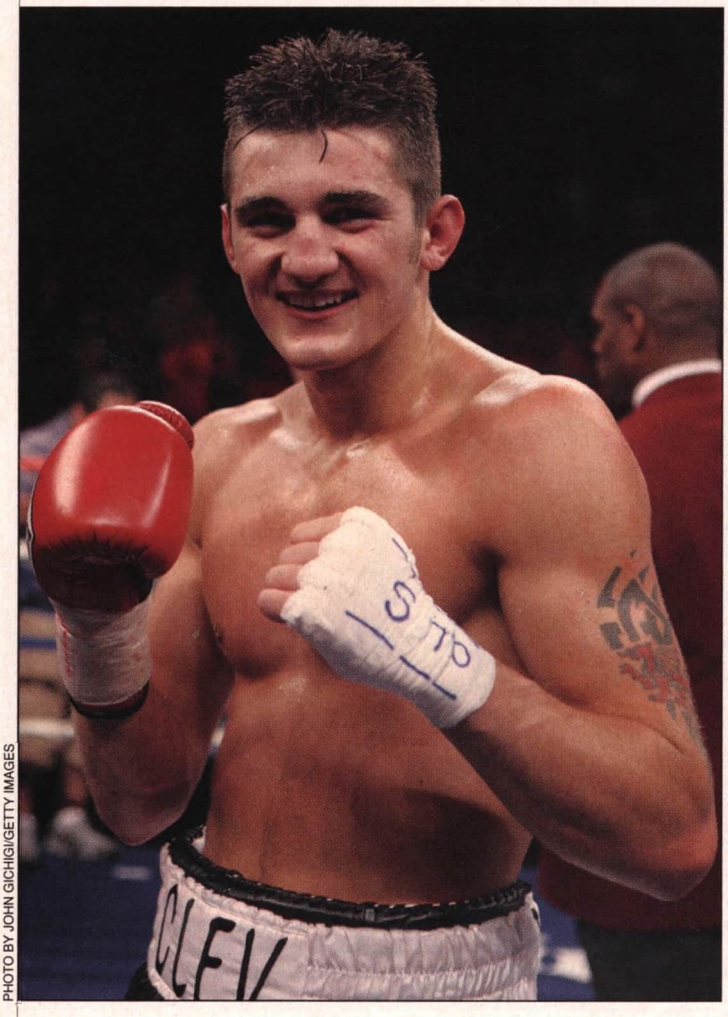

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Pro Record

2005		
July 23	Ernie Smith, Edinburgh, Scotland	W 4
Sept. 10	Darren Gethin, Cardiff, Wales	W 4
Dec. 4	Lance Hall, Telford, England	KO 3
2006		
March 4	Jon Foster, Manchester, England	W 4
June 1	Brendan Halford, Barnsley, England	W 4
July 8	Mark Phillips, Cardiff	W 4
Oct. 14	Tony Quigley, Manchester	KO 5
Nov. 18	Varuzhan Davtyan, Cardiff	W 4
2007		
April 7	Nick Okoth, Cardiff	W 8
July 21	Avitey Powers, Cardiff	KO 6
Nov. 3	Joey Vegas, Cardiff	W 8
2008		
April 16	Antonio Baker, Las Vegas, Nevada	W 8
Oct. 10	Tony Oakey, Liverpool, England	W12
Dec. 12	Douglas Otieno, Widnes, England	KO 4
2009		
Feb. 13	Samson Onyango, Swindon, England	KO 1
May 22	Billy Boyle, London, England	KO 2

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
16	16	0	0	6

"Math is something I find stimulating and challenging, and I actually think my studies help my boxing and vice versa," said Cleverly, an articulate former student of Enzo Calzaghe's Newbridge Boxing Club, now trained by his father, Vincent, and managed and promoted by Frank Warren.

"I wanted to study to become a doctor at one point and I had the academic grades to pursue this at the university, but it would have been almost impossible to combine the training required in medicine with a career in boxing. The boxing comes first, but I want to complete my education so that I will be able to move more easily into another field whenever my days in the ring are over. Math and physics were subjects in which I was always interested and I'm able to be at university every day and keep my head in the books for five to six hours a day around exam time while still progressing as a fighter. With a degree behind me, that will open up a lot of doors one day."

Having lived the life of a student in his first and second years—"burning the candle at both ends, going out with the boys and drinking and partying"—Cleverly has settled into a more settled social life with his girlfriend, Rebecca. Alcohol is off limits and days out at the safari park have become more frequent than nights out on the town.

"I can't afford to live the playboy lifestyle, not any more," he acknowledged. "It's time to get real now. I'm in 12-round fights and the stakes are getting higher all

(Continued on Page 106)

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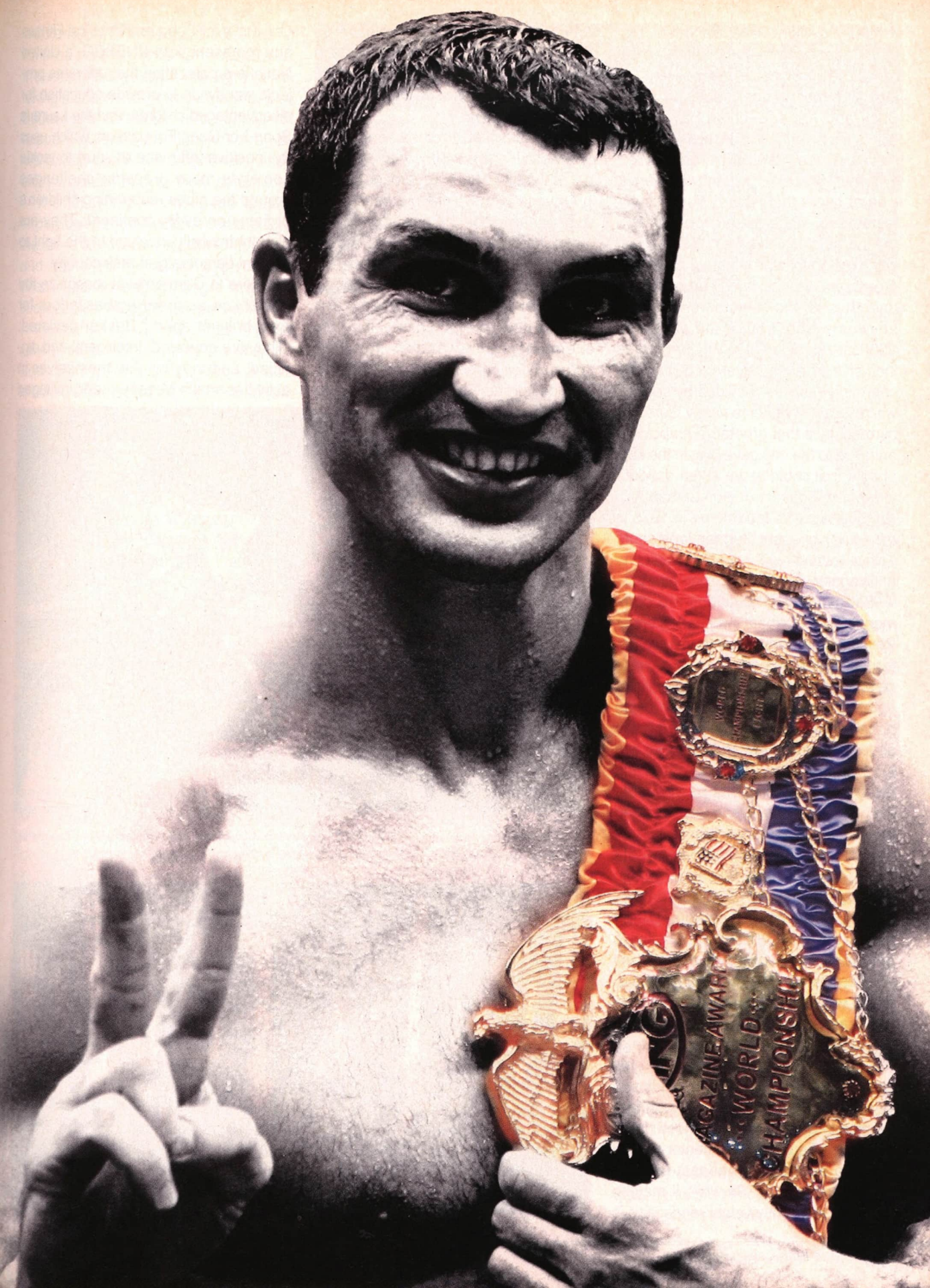
WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO CROWNED RING CHAMP

Why Do Millions Of Europeans Adore Him, While Americans Do Not?

By Brian Doogan

Caviar and champagne, bratwurst sausage and lachsschinken (boneless loin of pork gently cured and smoked), chocolate fondue fountains, and Black Forest Gateaux. Joe Liebling, who loved food as much as he loved fights and wrote about each with equal dexterity, would have relished the combination of haute cuisine and heavyweight combat that was on offer inside the Veltins-Arena, a soccer stadium in Gelsenkirchen, Germany.

The women in their pearls and evening dresses would have caught his eye and the comedian, Oliver Pocher, might have tickled him during his 20-minute roaming stand-up routine. The "country trash punk rock" of The Boss Hoss and the "garage rock" sound of Mando Diao would probably not have been his scene, but he could easily have eavesdropped in between the bands' performances on the likes of German tennis legend Boris Becker and soccer World Cup-winning captain Lothar Matthaus and colorfully related their appreciation of the action—as well as the gourmet.


WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIP

Liebling might have marveled, too, at the capacity and composition of the crowd of 61,000 people, many of whom—including men in sharp suits by Hugo Boss and Armani—could have been attired for a night at the theater.

World heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko frequently delivers a kind of opera that suits their particular tastes and, while many who watched the drama of his nine rounds in the ring with Ruslan Chagaev unfold on ESPN Classic in America remained positively unenthused, the customers who paid anywhere from $50 in the stands to $650 at ringside—the VIP price was inclusive of food, beverages, and the charming services provided by cocktail waitresses—went home happy. Sure, the pyrotechnics that greeted both boxers' entrance to the ring gave way to the kind of fight that could serve as an antidote to the raw violence of Muhammad Ali's title bout against Joe Frazier in 1975 in the Philippines, but German fans adore Klitschko, and his measured dissecting of Chagaev was music to their hearts.

Extravagant productions are commonplace in Germany, where Alexander Povetkin and Eddie Chambers, two potential opponents for Klitschko, were serenaded by singers backed by violinists before they waged war last year inside a major Berlin concert venue built in the shape of a circus tent. But Klitschko and his brother, Vitali, have cornered the market in a country that has become their second home. When Vitali stopped challenger Juan Carlos Gomez in April in defense of the WBC heavyweight title at Hanns-Martin-Schleyer Halle in Stuttgart, a total of 11.5 million viewers tuned in on German TV network RTL—a market share of 55 percent. Wladimir's systematic short-circuiting of Chagaev was watched by 11.16 million viewers, which represented a 58.4 percent market share, remarkable statistics given the increasingly marginalized state of the sport in the United States. In his native Ukraine, tens of thousands witnessed his recital on large monitors erected in Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in the center of Kiev and the bout was broadcast in more than 100 countries. So while it may be true that the heavyweight landscape is lamentable in the place that gave us world heavyweight champions from John L. Sullivan to Evander Holyfield, it would be erroneous to conclude that the same is true everywhere.

If the Klitschko brothers were from Connecticut and not Kiev, they would be two of the most highly regarded athletes in America. The Spinks brothers, Leon and Michael, rode the powerful vehicle of the 1976 Olympic Games to secure their popularity, but the Klitschkos—the second set of brothers since Michael and Leon to win recognition by THE RING as heavyweight champions—are exemplary ambassadors for their sport. They speak four languages, hold doctorates from the Kiev National University for Sport and Physical Fitness and represent both UNESCO, a United Nations organization that operates projects worldwide to provide education for disadvantaged children, and the Laureus Sport For Good Foundation, which uses the positive influence of sport to tackle society's most pressing challenges around the globe, supporting children's projects on every continent. They are also intrinsically involved in the fight to cement democracy in their country.

"Here in Germany we recognize the Klitschkos as great ambassadors for their brilliant sport," Becker declared. "They are educated, intelligent, and dignified, and they involve themselves in activities which benefit underprivileged

Europe loves Wladimir Klitschko (above), though it doesn't appear as if America is too enthralled with THE RING's first world heavyweight champion since 2004. HBO turned down the Klitschko-Chagaev fight, yet 61,000 fans filled Veltins-Arena, a soccer stadium in Gelsenkirchen, Germany (below).

PHOTOS BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

children all over the world. Sometimes in America people can be very insular and, if a world heavyweight title fight is not taking place in Las Vegas or at Madison Square Garden, then it is simply not happening. But the Klitschkos are tremendously popular internationally, and I enjoy watching both of them perform."

It is not simply a matter of geography or parochialism, however. Aesthetically, the more awkward Vitali has his critics and many of the same mob rubbish Wladimir for an allegedly fragile heart and suspect chin. Stopped early in his career in 1998 when he ran out of gas and got nailed in the 11th round by the obscure Ross Puritty from Oklahoma, he was knocked unconscious by Corrie Sanders in two rounds in 2003, and a year later against Lamon Brewster he disintegrated alarmingly after dominating the action in the early rounds and was unable to pick himself up off the canvas at the end of the fifth. "Broken Man," screamed the headline on the front cover of Britain's *Boxing News*. The paranoia that fueled his claims that he was drugged before he stepped into the ring at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas dripped like petroleum onto a funeral pyre.

He would later admit to a problem with severe nervousness, which has since lessened but not gone away. "I still get nervous, of course, but this is only natural," he said. "In fact, I do not feel butterflies in my stomach—it is more like flamingos flapping their wings. Fear is like poison from a cobra. With a little bit of this poison you can make someone healthy. Too much and it is death. This is why my fight against Samuel Peter in 2005 was very important to me (Klitschko got knocked down three times but climbed off the floor to win on points)."

At that point in his career he was undefeated. He was young and strong and regarded as the next big thing in heavyweight boxing, the knockout showman.

"I was a 'Dead Man Walking.' The critics said, 'No chin, no stamina, no balls, no nothing,' but I had a different point of view and I proved them wrong," he said. "So now they say that heavyweight boxing is dead, there are no heavyweights in America, nobody cares anymore, but guess what. We have sold out the stadium, more than 60,000 people, and millions are watching all over the world. This 'Dead Man Walking' has gone a long way."

PHOTO BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

If you saw one round, you basically saw them all, as Klitschko kept Chagaev at a safe and comfortable distance using his formidable left jab. The pounding quickly ripped into Chagaev's resolve and the underdog pretty much gave up on trying to get to the bigger, more talented man.

Chagaev might have felt that the same euphemism applied to him after his proposed rematch with "Russian Giant" Nicolay Valuev was cancelled at the last moment when a hepatitis antigen was detected in his system during a pre-fight medical in Helsinki, Finland. But the 30-year-old from Uzbekistan, who was ranked number three by THE RING, got thrown a lifeline when former RING world cruiserweight champion David Haye pulled out of his fight with Klitschko, citing a back injury, just 17 days before the June 20 date. Klitschko was stunned when the British challenger's decision was relayed by his manager, Bernd Bonte, at the precise moment that a small group of journalists from Britain's Sunday newspapers were interviewing him in a conference room at his camp.

Haye had managed to capture the imagination of boxing followers in the U.S. and the U.K. by knocking out New York's Monte Barrett in a slugfest, talking trash about the Klitschkos at every opportunity, and wearing a T-shirt brandishing a gruesome image of their dismembered heads. HBO was excited about broadcasting the fight, but Haye's withdrawal and Chagaev's sudden opportunity left the powers-that-be at the network distinctly uninterested. Kery Davis, HBO's senior vice president of sports programming, suggested to Bonte that Chagaev would not be recognized if he were to walk down the street, whereas Haye "looks like Lenny Kravitz."

The manner in which Klitschko dominated from the opening bell could not have been more impressive. His long jab was constantly in Chagaev's face, and when he caught him on the jaw with an overhand right in the second round, the Germany-based Uzbek's legs gave way and he took an eight-count from American referee Eddie Cotton. A short night seemed to be in the cards.

That the fight lasted another seven rounds was merely academic. Chagaev, 25-1-1 (17), remained utterly impotent and Klitschko, 53-3 (47), who was not even hit once by a significant punch, landed his steel hammers almost at will. Chagaev's face became heavily marked from the

accumulation of blows and he sustained a nasty cut above the left eye in the eighth round from one of Klitschko's many right crosses. More heavy bombardment came in the ninth, as Klitschko, 240¼, unloaded with both fists with his opponent pinned against the ropes. With the last drop of resistance from Chagaev's body removed, he was retired at the beginning of the 10th round. A 5½-inch disparity in height against the 6'6½" Klitschko hurt Chagaev, 224¾, unquestionably, but he was technically overwhelmed as well. Klitschko's reconstruction under Emanuel Steward mirrors a similar transformation in Lennox Lewis that the Kronk trainer oversaw after Lewis' stunning knockout loss to Oliver McCall in 1995.

PHOTO BY LARS BARON/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A crushing right from Klitschko in the second round (above) sent Chagaev tumbling down (below). Chagaev, a late replacement for injured David Haye, stayed on his feet for the remainder of the bout. Ultimately, Chagaev gave up sitting on his stool after the ninth.

"We had the same criticisms of Lennox that we now get with Wladimir and I remember it well," Steward reflected. "In my mind, there are a lot of similarities between the two. They are only as good as the guys in front of them let them be. American fans have given up on the heavyweights because Americans no longer dominate the division, but I think they are coming round to Wladimir now. Like Lennox, Wladimir is very intelligent and a lot of the time we just talk. He used to make the same mistakes, but I think he is the complete fighter right now. He's been stopped, he's been cut very badly, he's been knocked down three times in one fight against Sam Peter, which he still won, but he's learned how to clinch and how to survive. If everything is sunny all the time, you don't learn until it rains one day. Wladimir has learned a lot. You know, when I was with Lennox, I told him Wladimir was going to dominate the heavyweight division one day. I knew he would.

"Vitali's fight with Lennox made him a big, big hero and Wladimir has not had that fight yet. He needs some devastating performances, which he is capable of achieving. They are different kinds of fighters and, technically, Wladimir has advanced a great deal. All my heavyweights have been very technical. They have had big, solid jabs, physically they have been very strong and they work their strength. Wladimir has even better balance than Lennox had. Lennox was explosive with the uppercut and if Lennox was in jeopardy in a fight, he would run out and do what he had to do. What Wlad has is a great ability to control you. Wlad has an unbelievable jab and great balance, and he does things easily and naturally now. His footwork is phenomenal. But champions are also made inside the head. Vitali has that inner resolve and now Wladimir has that too."

He also has THE RING belt that his brother won against Sanders in 2004 and, for the 33-year-old, this marks the culmination of his quest for respect. "THE RING championship belt has been held by all of the great champions down the years and I have wanted to win it for so long," he said. "I'm so happy to have realized this dream."

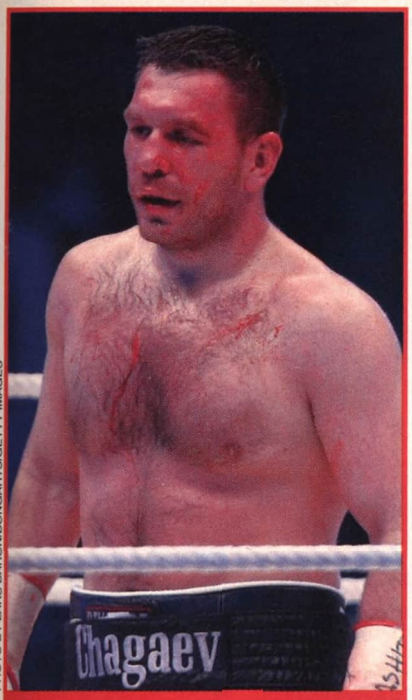


PHOTO BY LARS BARON/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Chagaev was busted up by the ninth round after sustaining a heavy barrage of Klitschko right crosses. With a cut over his left eye, and his face swelling, the fight was finally called at the start of the 10th round.

Now he must continue to win in order to secure his legacy. With longevity, Lewis managed to win over people who had written him off years before. Klitschko can relate to Lewis' path, but he cannot stand the thought of defending his title in the near future against Lewis' compatriot.

"I'm very upset about David Haye," Wladimir insisted. "Because of him, I missed a fight date in March/April and it was supposed to be at Chelsea Stadium in London, but he could not deliver Chelsea Stadium. Then I delivered for him—61,000 people at Schalke Stadium—and I was shocked when I got the news that he could not fight. I don't want to blame him. I understand that any athlete can get injured and cannot continue his preparation, so no blame for that. But he mentioned to the press that he needed two more weeks, and then later on it was going to be four weeks, and finally maybe six or seven weeks. I have never ever worked with such unprofessional people as David Haye and his team. There was no statement from the doctor. What happened? How much time did he really need?

"He has a big, dirty mouth and I told him before that actions speak louder. If you want a chance to fight me, then get in the freakin' line. A lot of heavyweights are going through a lot of fights to become a number-one mandatory. David Haye, because of his mouth, wants to get this chance. Get in the freakin' line and get some fights and, if you can make it, I will fight you. But I think he is going to end up on the floor, so I can't rely on David Haye at all. To me, this man is immature as a fighter and immature as a person. There is still the American, Chris Arreola, who is unbeaten, and there is Alexander Povetkin, also still unbeaten. I want to make fights that will be good for heavyweight boxing and I'm determined to finish my career as strongly as possible."

Intriguingly, he also raised the possibility of Klitschko vs. Klitschko. "We would have to talk to our mother again," he said. "We know how much interest this fight would create and it would mean that one of us would be the supreme heavyweight champion. Of course, our mother would not be happy. If we did fight, I would be very worried about the health of my brother because it would be very bloody and very bad. We are very competitive and it would be for real. I am the better technical boxer, but he is stronger. It would be interesting."

Mama Klitschko, of course, would never sanction the bout, so Wladimir will have to feast on what remains of a carcass that once spawned contests for the richest prize in sport. In Germany and elsewhere it is a prize that still carries plenty of caché. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

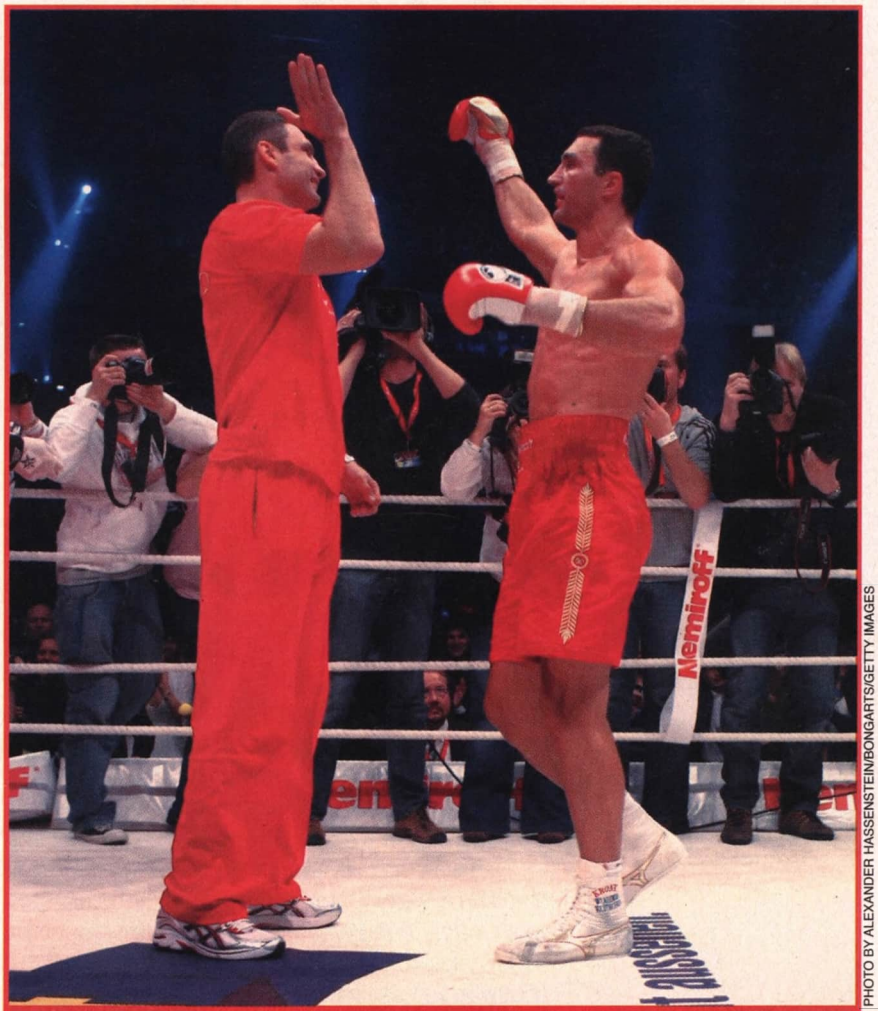


PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

As the last two RING world heavyweight champions, Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko have apparently completed their dream of "world domination." Interestingly, Wladimir was not totally dismissive of the idea of a Klitschko vs. Klitschko showdown.

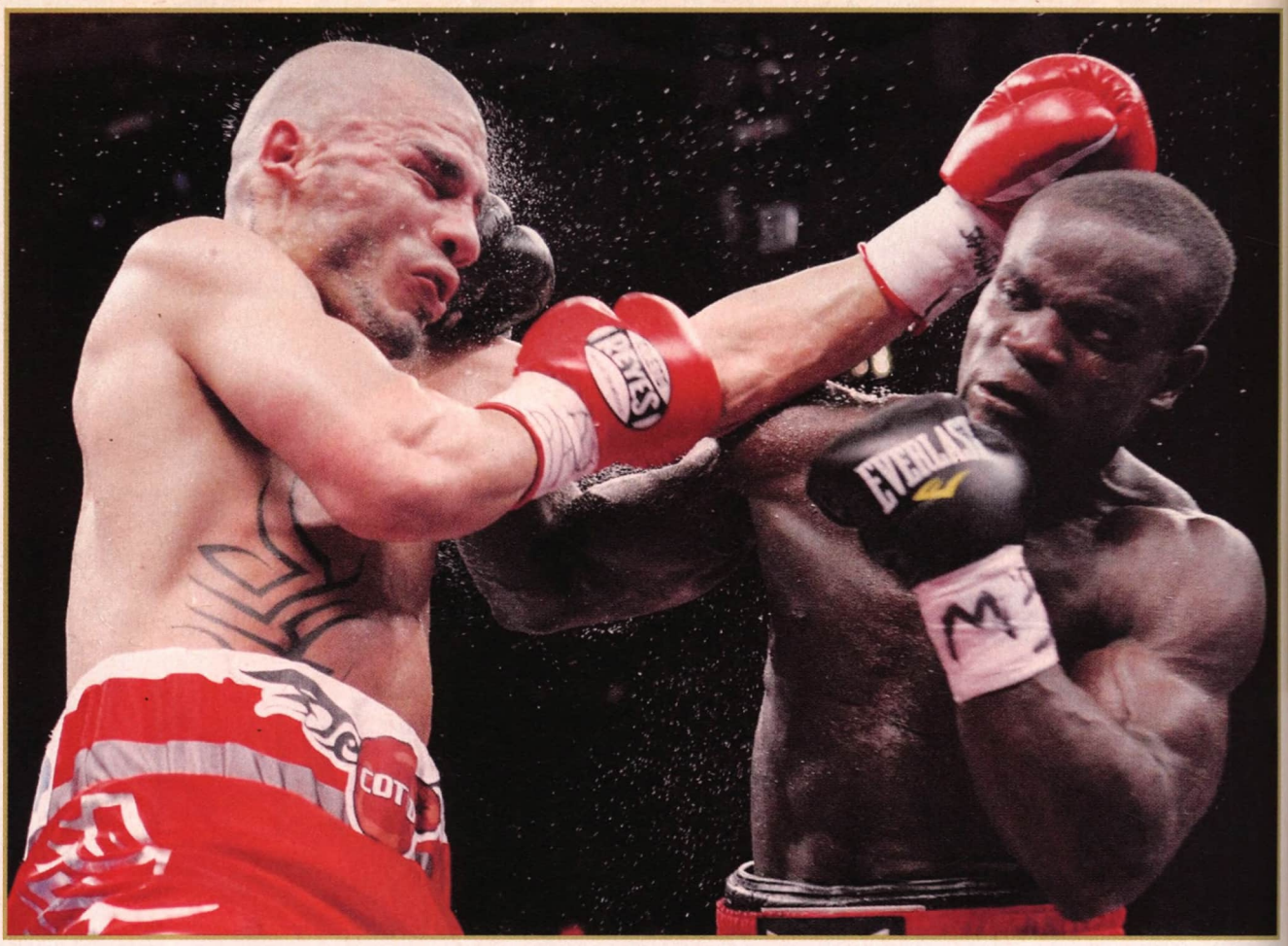
IS COTTO ON AN IRREVERSIBLE SLIDE?

Victory Over Clottey Reveals Some Troubling Signs

By Don Stradley
PHOTOS BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

If Miguel Cotto had anything left after last year's loss to Antonio Margarito, Joshua Clottey would either bring it out of him, or beat it out of him.

That was the prevailing attitude prior to their June 13 meeting at Madison Square Garden, a bout that, for all intents and purposes, was Cotto's true comeback after being stopped by Margarito last July. Cotto scored a win over Michael Jennings in February, but that bout was an easy touch for Cotto after suffering his first professional loss. Against Jennings, Cotto performed like a man testing a mended bone, taking a slow, measured approach. Fortunately for Cotto, Jennings flopped in five. A rugged specimen such as Clottey, however,



A 20-stitch gash over Cotto's left eye provided a target for Clottey from the third round on. Cotto was more active than Clottey throughout most of the bout and was able to gut out the victory, but the question now is just how much does the 28-year-old have left?

would provide a more accurate gauge as to what Cotto could do now.

By the time 12 rounds had passed, and the crowd of 17,734 had been treated to a rollicking bout with plenty of drama, we learned that Cotto, who won via split decision, can still dig deep and win fights. But winning a split verdict over a good but not great fighter is usually what happens when a fighter is on the way out, not on the way up.

It makes one wonder if Cotto is on the wane.

Cotto came into the bout dealing with some personal issues, not the least of which was the Margarito bout. In April, a publicized squabble with his uncle and longtime trainer, Evangelista Cotto, resulted in the firing of Evangelista and promotion of former assistant trainer Joe Santiago. Cotto has also switched his training base from Puerto Rico to Florida, a move that was allegedly part of the rift with Evangelista.

As for his reputation, WBO welterweight titlist Cotto has fallen a few paces behind Top Rank's other cash cow, junior welterweight champion Manny Pacquiao. A few years ago, it was impossible to imagine Bob Arum finding a bigger attraction than Cotto, a genuine Puerto Rican icon, but Pacquiao has stamped his presence all over the sport. The reaction to Cotto in New York is still gargantuan, and Arum would never say anything negative about Cotto, but it's hard to see Cotto matching Pacquiao in terms of pay-per-view buys, and accolades from the boxing press. Cotto can still make money, but Pacquiao is making history.

Cotto has changed in subtle ways post-Margarito. He was such a deadpan character for so many years that it's strange to see him now covered in tattoos and sneering a bit. We're also seeing more of Cotto's children than ever before—and they are beautiful children—as if Cotto was rebuilding the persona that had been shattered by Margarito. The stoic, somewhat robotic Cotto has been replaced by this scowling family man; a tattooed tough guy was coming to reclaim what Margarito had taken.

Many suspect that Margarito, who was later suspended for attempting to use illegal handwraps in a bout with Shane Mosley, may also have worn loaded gloves to beat Cotto. And Cotto is carrying himself in a manner that says, *Forget what happened, that was an unfortunate situation, but I am back.* It's as if Cotto has been allowed a tremendous "do over." But even if Cotto and his fans dismiss the "L" on his record, and even if the press is eager to place an asterisk next to that bout, they can't dismiss the physical toll dealt out by Margarito. The demons in Cotto's mind may have been put to rest by outlasting Clottey, but demons still

Anatomy Of A Split Descision

Close fights often result in split decisions, and split decisions often come under scrutiny.

Judge Don Trella's score of 116-111 was especially criticized for giving Miguel Cotto a five-point edge over Joshua Clottey. More than one bystander groused, "*No way was that a five-point fight.*"

But we must remember that judges do not score the "fight," but rather the rounds, and Trella simply thought Cotto won more of them.

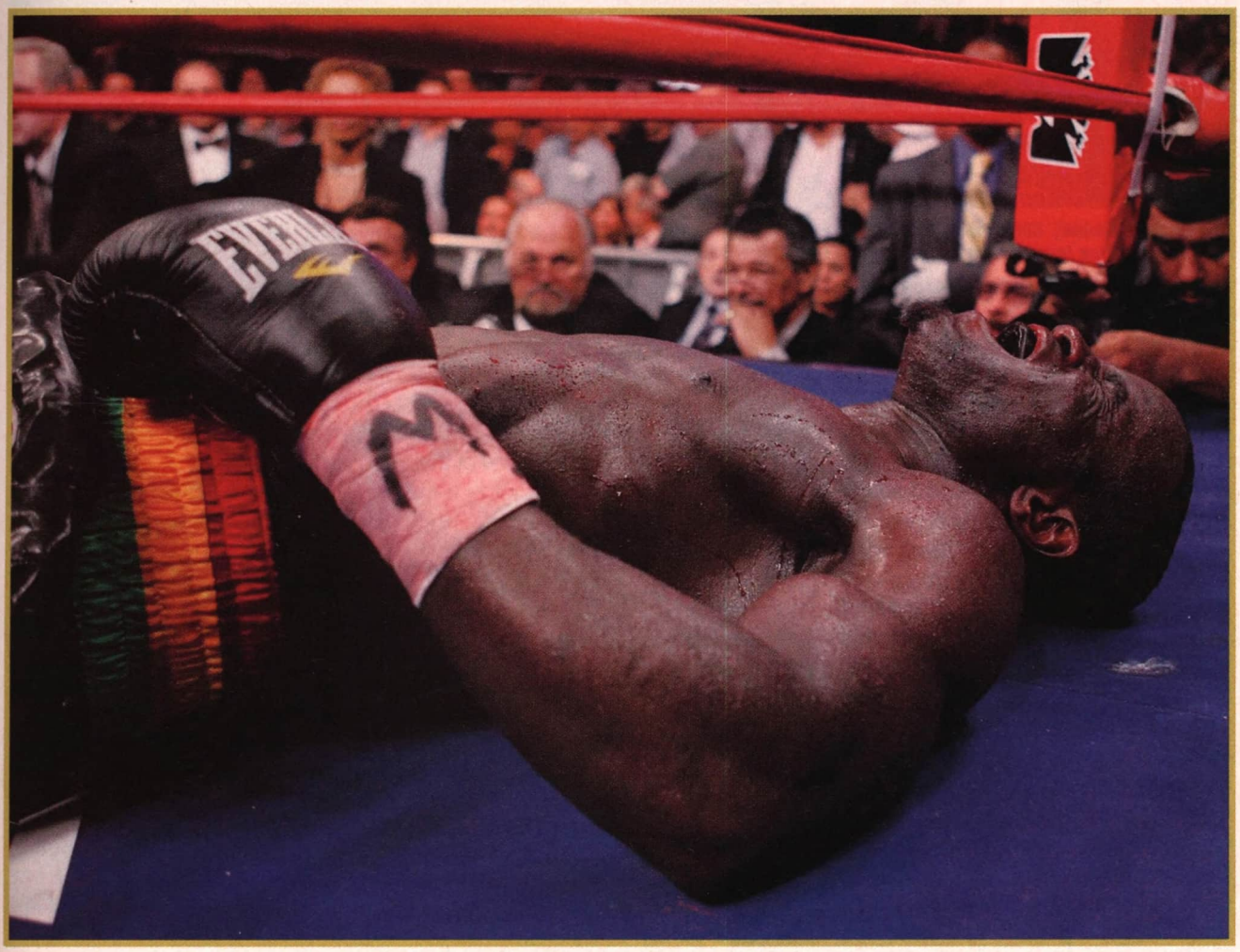
Judges Trello, John McKaie, and Tom Miller were in agreement on only six rounds: 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11. Of those six, they gave three to Cotto (1, 6, and 11) and three to Clottey (5, 7, and 8).

The remaining six rounds were all split votes. A look at the scorecards showed that Cotto earned votes from two judges on five of the six split rounds. In other words, the close rounds were generally awarded to Cotto, and that's how he won. Perhaps Trella and McKaie were abiding by the unwritten (and wrongheaded) law that the titlist wins the close rounds. Or perhaps, and this is the most likely reason, Cotto was awarded for being busier.

The punch stats as recorded by CompuBox may have favored Clottey for landing 36 percent of his total punches to Cotto's 25 percent, but Cotto was more active, especially with his jab, throwing 319 to Clottey's 209. Since Clottey spent large portions of the bout in a defensive posture, Cotto's aggression won the night. True, Cotto's aggression wasn't always effective, but it's better to punch and hit a glove than to not punch at all.

Trella's score may have sounded generous, but not when you consider he gave the close rounds to Cotto. Meanwhile, Miller gave Clottey *five* of the final six rounds, which could also be considered too generous, unless there's a rule where rounds are won by using your gloves to cover your face.

—D.S.



Clottey ended up on the canvas for almost a minute after getting tangled up with Cotto in the fifth round. His complaints to referee Arthur Mercante Jr. about an injured knee fell on deaf ears. He was told to walk it off.

Backed to the ropes, Cotto may have had a flashback to his disastrous July 2008 bout with Antonio Margarito. Clottey, however, lacked that certain something (power, plaster of paris?) to take him off his feet.

lurk in his body, in his bones, his skull, his gray matter. He's an old 28, thanks largely to Margarito.

There were times during the bout with Clottey that Cotto looked as if the fires within him weren't burning as they once did. By no means is he a shot fighter, but he's perhaps 95 percent of what he used to be, and he needed every bit of that 95 percent to handle Clottey.

Clottey, 147, Bronx, New York, by way of Accra, Ghana, had a kick in his step when he entered the ring. The Manhattan weather had been as humid as a Louisiana swamp all weekend, but Clottey looked remarkably cool. Even his cornermen were upbeat, as if they might take on Cotto's corner after the fight. They remained animated during Cotto's raucous introduction, pumping their fists and waving towels as the noise for Cotto grew.

When Cotto walked to the ring, he was greeted by the most incredible sound, one long cheer that seemed to drop down from the ceiling in waves, quieting only when Cotto knelt in his corner for a moment of prayer, and then erupting again. The commotion continued all during the first round; the Garden nearly blew up at the end of the stanza when Cotto dropped Clottey with a short left.

Cotto, 146, had things his way until the third round when an accidental clash of heads left him with a laceration over his left eyebrow. The long, deep gash changed the fight, as Cotto was constantly wiping at it or trying to shake the blood out of his eyes. A bout that took place earlier in the evening between Ivan Calderon and Rodel Mayol was stopped and declared a technical draw when Calderon suffered a gash high on his scalp, but Calderon's cut was nowhere near as bad as Cotto's. Cotto would need 20 stitches to sew up the damaged area.

Clottey grew bolder during the next two rounds, but there was an awkward moment in the fifth when the fighters got tangled and Clottey found himself on the canvas. To some it looked like Cotto threw Clottey down; others thought Clottey slipped. It was an amalgam of wet canvas, slippery bodies, and clumsiness. Clottey stayed on his back for nearly a minute complaining of an injured knee. Referee Arthur Mercante Jr. told him to get up and walk it off. That should've been a sign that this was not Clottey's night.

The sixth was the best round of the fight, as Cotto pinned Clottey in his own corner and ripped at him with combinations, sending the crowd into spasms. But Clottey responded by dominating the seventh, eighth, and ninth rounds. Cotto, who'd been his vintage self in the sixth, suddenly looked exhausted. The blood was bothering him, and his power was fading. Still, Cotto had enough spring in his legs to get through the final rounds, landing enough flurries to thrill his fans

More Pain After The Closing Bell

When the decision was announced that he had been outpointed by Miguel Cotto, Joshua Clottey winced in anger and started to leave the ring. He had to be coaxed back for a post-fight interview. Clottey allegedly told Bob Arum that he was going to quit the sport. Arum talked him down, and by the time he spoke to the press, Clottey was his usual, calm self.

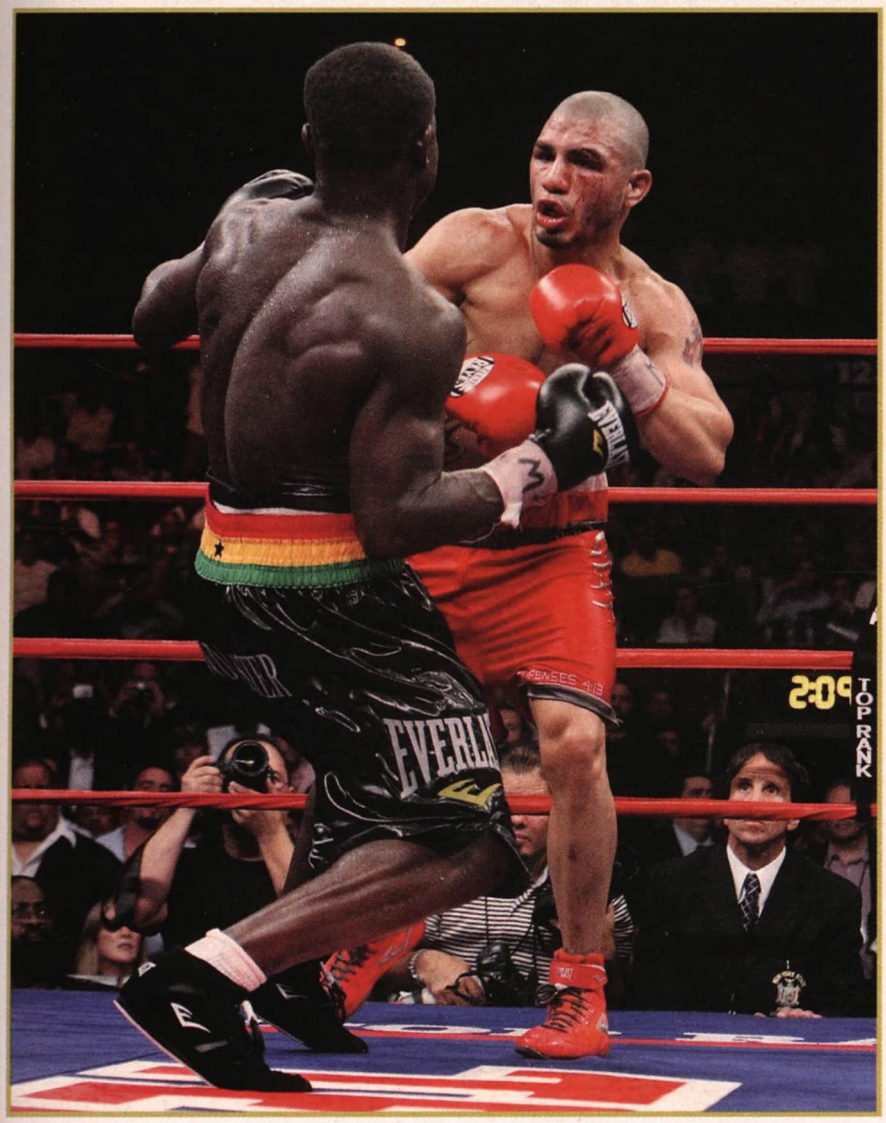
"I think I won the fight, but I didn't get the decision," Clottey said. "The thing that would make me happy is a rematch."

Clottey, 35-3 (21), is tough enough to take an anvil to the head, and his defense is difficult to penetrate, but he's a bit slow on his feet and is not a particularly heavy puncher. He was born to be a difficult opponent, not a Hall of Famer. But we wouldn't blame anyone for avoiding him, because there's rarely an upside to fighting a durable, head-clashing, brute who can box a little. Still, Arum praised Clottey and suggested Andre Berto, Paul Williams, and Mosley as possible opponents.

After the bout, though, Clottey's handlers stalked around in the bowels of the Garden, complaining to anyone who would listen that their fighter had been robbed. One of Clottey's seconds pointed out in a loud, passionate voice that Cotto had not been penalized for his rough fighting. "He threw Joshua, he hit him in back of the head, and there were low blows. But not one point was taken away!"

After criticizing referee Arthur Mercante Jr., he chided Arum's promises. "No one will fight Clottey now," he said, shaking his head sadly as if the future had just slipped through his fingers.

—D.S.



Cotto briefly staggers Clottey with a counter right. It was the volume of punches thrown—and perhaps the raucous pro-Cotto New York City crowd—that swayed the judges in the popular Puerto Rican's favor.

and sweep rounds 11 and 12 on two of the three judges' scorecards.

Judge Don Trella scored the bout for Cotto, 116-111; John McKaie saw it for Cotto, 115-112; Tom Miller gave it to Clottey, 114-113. THE RING scored it 115-113 in Cotto's favor. Many along press row felt Clottey had won, but Arum quickly dismissed any notions of a rematch.

Citing the economics of boxing, Arum told the press that it made more sense to match Cotto with Pacquiao. Cotto-Clottey II wouldn't generate a fraction of what Cotto-Pacquiao could on a worldwide basis. Were Clottey to fight Cotto again, Clottey might win, putting the kibosh on what could be Top Rank's biggest fight of the year. There's also an underlying sense that Cotto is ready to be taken, and Arum would rather see Pacquiao do it. If you don't believe that, ask yourself if Arum would push for Cotto-Pacquiao if Cotto had destroyed Clottey. Probably not. Arum has two key properties, one still in his prime and one showing some road wear. He'll feed one to the other. That's his way of consolidating.

The ubiquitous Pacquiao was ringside, sitting next to Arum like the adopted son of a rich man on holiday. Wearing a beige cap and a baby blue wool vest, "Pac-Man" resembled a 1930s golfer. But even if his wardrobe seemed borrowed from the Ben Hogan collection, he was still smiling like a happy wolf dreaming of future meals. Prior to

Cotto momentarily stops the onrushing Clottey with a solid left to the temple. Clottey would have been wise to have been more aggressive when he had Cotto in trouble. That's a mistake Manny Pacquiao would not make.

the bout, most would've said Cotto was too big for Pacquiao, but after the bout, most agreed Pacquiao would more than hold his own. Clottey had Cotto going, but held back when he should have pressed. Such a thing would be inconceivable from Pacquiao.

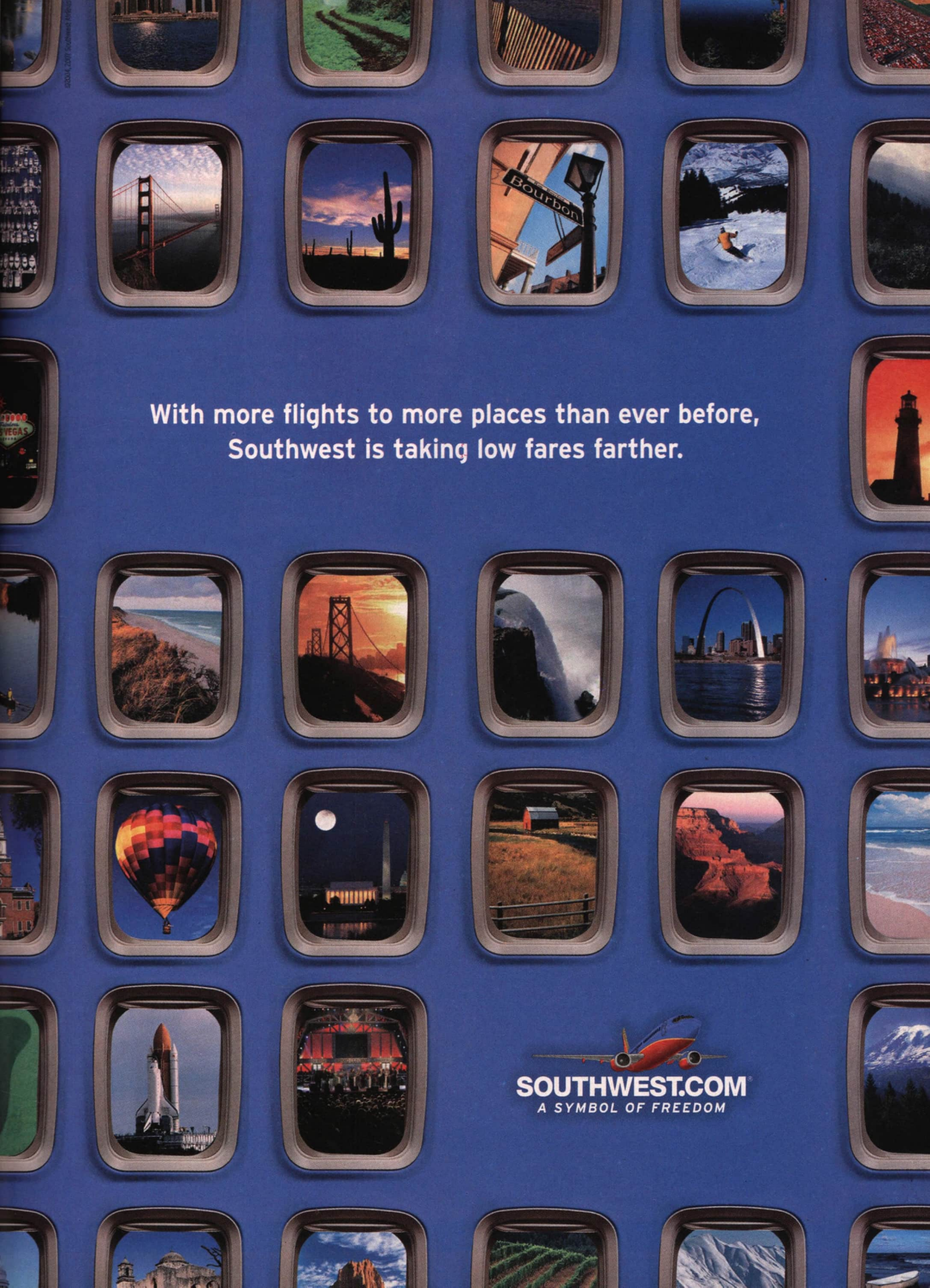
Cotto, 34-1 (27), wasn't saying much after the bout. Sporting a massive bandage over his eye, he acknowledged that he'd been hit plenty of times by Clottey, that he danced more in the later rounds to avoid getting hit by right hands, and in regards to his future, he would do whatever the company thought was best. He also admitted he was in no hurry to make any decisions. "The people have to wait till I rest a little bit," he said.

While we've been waiting to see exactly where Cotto belonged among boxing's elite, we may have forgotten the punishment he's been taking. Starting with his bouts against DeMarcus Corley and Ricardo Torres, where he was rocked, wobbled, and dropped, through his bouts with Zab Judah, Mosley, Margarito, and now Clottey, he has been through a hellacious few years. Perhaps like other Puerto Rican stars Wilfred Benitez and Felix Trinidad, Cotto may be feeling the sport's effects at an earlier age than he would like. His eyebrows are fleshy masses waiting to be torn open, and if he was down to 95 percent against Clottey, he may be down to 92 percent now.

While a few Top Rank employees milled around after the press conference, some with sheepish grins on their faces, Cotto vanished into the night, hoping to be stitched up and ready for the annual Puerto Rican Day parade the following morning. He may not have given the dominant performance for which his followers had hoped, but the general feeling was that the fight had been a good one, and good fights are important for New York, especially bouts involving Cotto.

Cotto's New York fans often joke that they will sacrifice groceries for a few days in order to have money for Cotto tickets. This bout drew more people than Cotto's bout with Mosley, and showed that Cotto's fans are still wildly devoted. The party atmosphere was strong all night and you wouldn't find a single Puerto Rican in the crowd who thought the decision unjust. They adore this man from Caguas, they're behind him for every uphill battle. But even they must know the hill grows steeper every year. ■

Don Stradley, a regular freelance writer for THE RING, was ringside at the Garden for Cotto-Clottey.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By Eric Raskin

THE PAC 10

Pacquiao's Legacy Is Secure … But These 10 Opponents Can Still Enhance It

You know you've made it when the question is no longer "Is he great?" but rather "How great is he?" That's where Manny Pacquiao is now. No matter how you define the word "great," it's beyond dispute that the word applies to the reigning junior welterweight champion and pound-for-pound king.

So how great is he? Is he the best of his era? Is he the best of the last 30 years? Should he be mentioned in the same breath as Sugar Ray Robinson and Henry Armstrong? That's what the next few years are about for Pacquiao, determining just how great he is. (Well, that and making insane amounts of money so that everyone in his 80-person entourage is taken care of for the next four generations.)

Since crushing Ricky Hatton in two rounds on May 2 with a left hand that will serve as the foundation for every knockout montage posted on YouTube from this point forward, the 30-year-old Pacquiao has occasionally started dropping the word "retirement." He's spoken of having maybe only one or two more fights, then leaving the sport to again run for public office in his native Philippines. Of course, Oscar De La Hoya was supposed to be retired by age

Who's next? After savaging Ricky Hatton to win The Ring junior welterweight championship, Pacquiao pretty much has his pick of opponents. But whom he chooses will certainly impact his legacy.

30, Floyd Mayweather was supposedly burnt out two years ago, and two of Pacquiao's most famous rivals, Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales, both waved their goodbyes already. Hardly anybody in the fight game leaves when they say they're going to leave. And Pacquiao will be no exception. He simply has too much left to do, too many intriguing opponents left to tangle with.

In this article, we'll name 10 such opponents. Pacquiao is already great, his Hall of Fame induction is already guaranteed, but each of these opponents can enhance "Pac-Man's" legacy to some degree. If he fights and defeats all 10 of them, he's probably the greatest boxer who ever lived. More realistically, if he fights and defeats a handful of them, it lifts him from the rarified air in which he currently resides to air that is even more rare. How close he can come to being recognized as the best ever depends strongly on whom he fights and what results he produces from this point forward. And these are the 10 fighters with the potential to help him most in that regard.

Fortunately, there's a sizable crop to choose from because Pacquiao has proven so proficient at division-hopping. In his last four fights, he's been a junior lightweight, a lightweight, a welterweight, and then a junior welter. He'll almost certainly never see 130 pounds again, but he could probably return to 135 for the right fight, and just how high in weight he could go is anybody's guess. His domination of Oscar De La Hoya last December opened a wide spectrum of possible matches against fighters who once seemed absurdly large in comparison.

For each of the 10 opponents, we've broken the discussion down into three categories. First is "Enhancing The Legacy," an exploration of just how this opponent could serve to make Pacquiao even greater than he already is. Second is "Danger Factor," where we analyze how likely it is that Pac-Man comes away with a win. And third is "Will It Happen?" That one's pretty much self-explanatory.

So in no particular order, here is the "Pac 10," the opponents who can each offer something to ensure that Pacquiao continues to entertain his fans rather than entertaining thoughts of retirement.

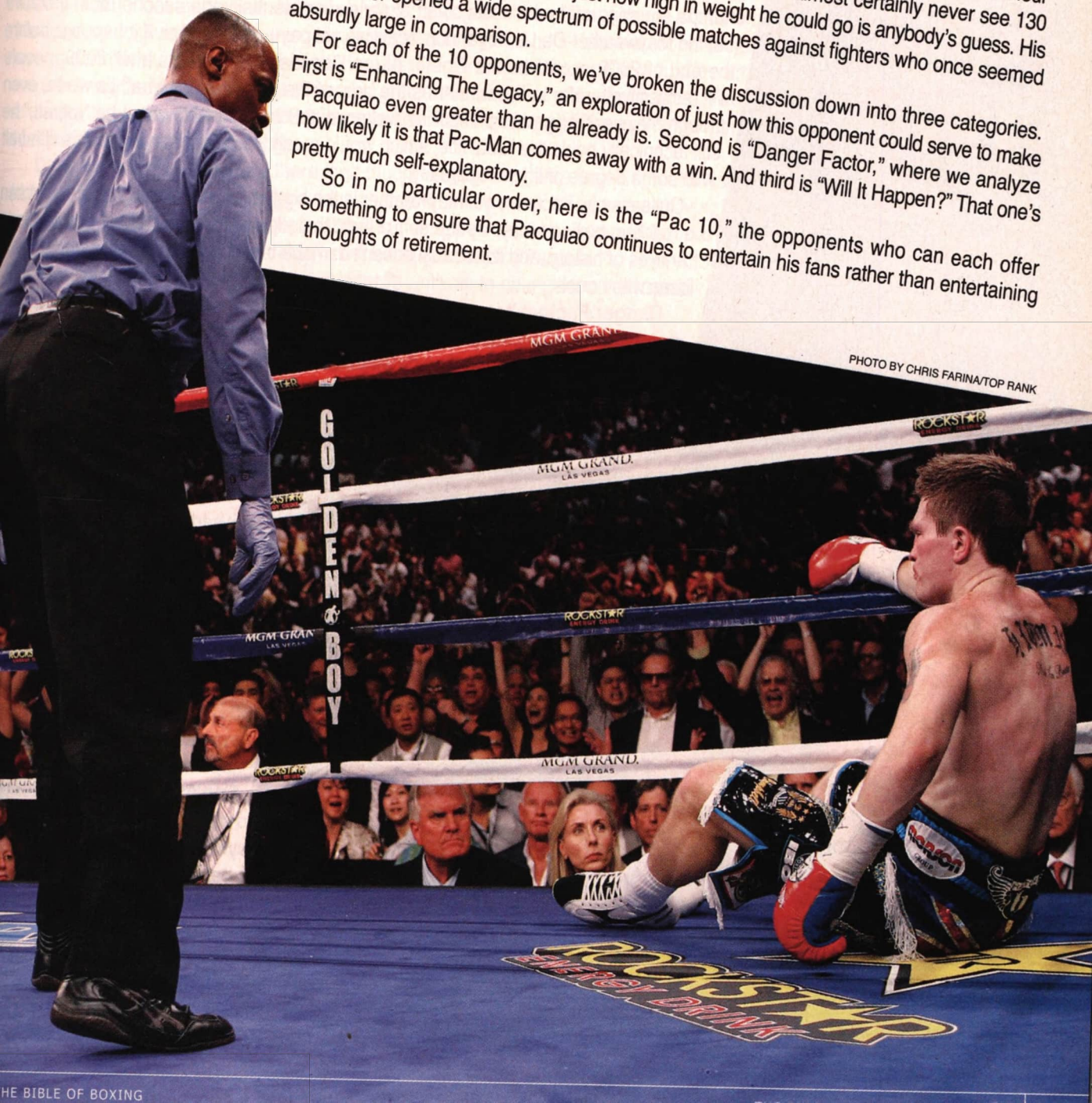

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

1 FLOYD MAYWEATHER

Enhancing The Legacy: The Mayweather-Juan Manuel Marquez fight was postponed just before this issue went to press. No new date was available at that time, but regardless of whether or not Marquez-Mayweather eventually happens, Pacquiao-Mayweather would still be a huge event.

After all, many observers didn't recognize Pacquiao as boxing's P-4-P king until "Money" announced his retirement, and the Filipino's elevation, while well deserved, came somewhat by default. If he beats Mayweather head-to-head, even if Marquez got to him first, there's no longer anything "by default" about Pacquiao's coronation.

It's obvious why this fight means so much to Pacquiao's legacy. It's the last two P-4-P champs squaring off in a classic clash of styles in potentially the second most lucrative (behind Mayweather-De La Hoya) non-heavyweight pay-per-view ever. If it happens before the end of 2009, it crowns the Fighter of the Decade. If it happens after 2009, people will retroactively refer to the winner as the best of the '00s. And for what it's worth, even though Mayweather gave up THE RING welterweight championship when he "retired," he still technically holds the lineal title, which would mean Pacquiao is trying for his fifth belt with some degree of lineal legitimacy.

Quite simply, Pacquiao vs. Mayweather is the biggest, most meaningful fight that can be made in boxing today. It's the sort of fight that elevates the winner several levels in the eyes of history, and it probably doesn't damage the loser much at all, as long as he loses with honor.

Danger Factor: It is no accident that Mayweather is undefeated. Sure, careful matchmaking in recent years has partially accounted for that. But nearly perfect technical abilities, outstanding defense, and hands that move in a blur have been the bigger factors. And remember, Pacquiao has looked untouchable his last three fights against faded or face-first opposition; go back one more fight to his rematch against Marquez, and you'll see that a clever boxer/counterpuncher can still give him trouble.

Mayweather prepping for comeback

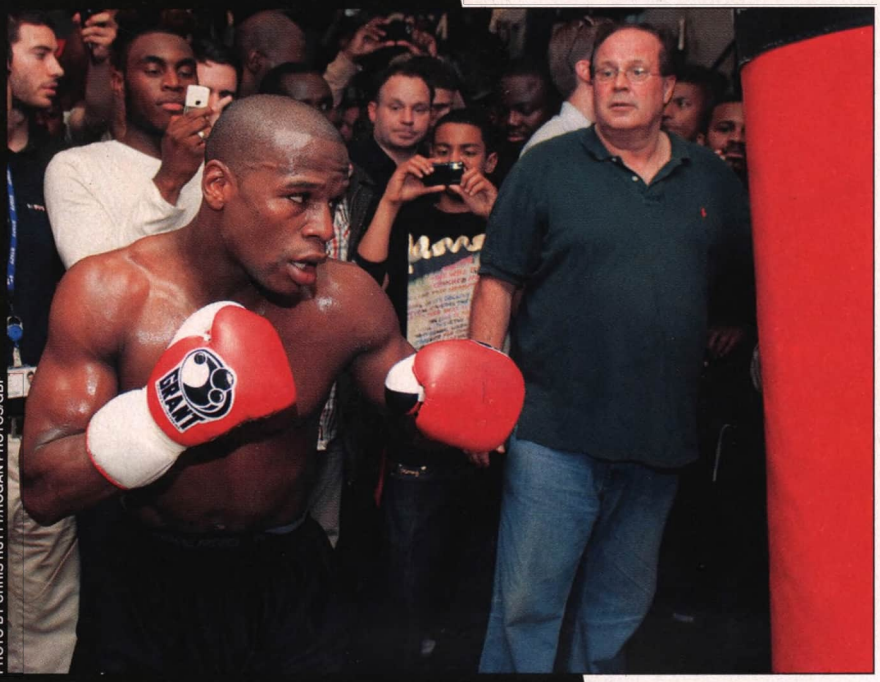

PHOTO BY CHRIS HUTTY/HOGAN PHOTOS/GBP

This is a fight where you can make an impassioned argument for either man winning and where the betting odds are certain to be close either way. Maybe Mayweather doesn't present extraordinary physical danger, but in terms of the danger of defeat, Pac-Man faces plenty of it in this fight.

Will It Happen? Within a single sentence, Mayweather will tell you it's not likely to happen because Pacquiao is promoted by Bob Arum and he'll also tell you Pacquiao can "come get some." Realistically, Mayweather's grudge against Arum shouldn't be an impediment to this bout happening. What could impede it are egos that refuse to concede to an even purse split. But if both guys keep winning, the amount of total money on the table should overrule all objections. It appears unlikely for 2009, but quite possible in 2010.

JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ

2

Enhancing The Legacy: Now that Marquez' match with Mayweather has been postponed, it's going to be a while before we know exactly how things are going to shake out. But while a victory over Mayweather would greatly enhance a third Marquez-Pacquiao fight, it's certainly not a prerequisite, as the Mexican and Filipino already have a compelling history.

Officially, in two fights against Marquez, Pacquiao is 1-0-1. But it's not hard to find an observer who thinks he should be 0-2. Or 0-1-1. The fact is, in two fights, neither man has established any sort of superiority over the other. It's been a classic rivalry, and most all-time great fighters ultimately got the best of their fiercest rivals. Pacquiao got the best of Morales over the course of three fights. He hasn't yet gotten the best of Marquez (even if the official judges gave him one point's worth of edge). A third fight with the masterful Mexican would give Pacquiao an opportunity to resolve that. And if Pacquiao could retire saying definitively that he out-dueled Morales, Barrera, and Marquez, it would be an extraordinary feather in his cap at the end of an extraordinary era of featherweights. Pac is already the leader of that pack. But the question marks surrounding his two fights with Marquez have to nag at him a bit.

Danger Factor: Obviously, there isn't much to separate these two. Each man is highly dangerous to the other. Pacquiao is dangerous in a more literal sense, having scored four knockdowns of Marquez without suffering one himself, whereas Marquez is the one guy who seems to be able to think a step ahead of Pacquiao at times. So far, he's been Pac-Man's Kryptonite, and that's unlikely to change too dramatically the next time they fight.

Pacquiao has looked better since his rematch with Marquez in March '08—but then again, so has Marquez, who's suddenly a knockout machine. If there's a tiebreaker, it could be the fact that Pacquiao's body has been freakishly receptive to adding pounds, and the Filipino might be a slightly bigger, stronger man at this stage of their careers. So he'd probably be favored over Marquez. But not by much.

Will It Happen? If Marquez has indeed defeated Mayweather by the time he fights Pacquiao a third time, then he and Pacquiao are on a collision course, plain and simple. A third fight has to happen. If he loses to Mayweather, then this rivalry is far less likely to get resolved. But it would remain a possibility down the road, particularly if Pacquiao suffers a loss also and they're positioned for a third bout with a crossroads feel to it.

Marquez kayos Juan Diaz in spectacular fashion

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

3 SHANE MOSLEY

Enhancing The Legacy: Although Mayweather makes for the most marketable fight for Pacquiao at welterweight, Mosley currently holds recognition as the baddest man in the division and represents, in the minds of many, the ultimate challenge at 147 pounds. Sugar Shane is arguably just as fast as Pacquiao, probably hits harder, is definitely bigger and stronger, and has just as much superfight experience. Pacquiao beating Mosley would be every bit as profound a feat as Henry Armstrong beating Barney Ross, Michael Spinks beating Larry Holmes, or Ray Leonard beating Marvin Hagler. And think what those wins did for those fighters' legacies.

Mosley isn't just another Hall of Fame name to add to Pacquiao's collection; he's also coming off perhaps the best win over his career, a shocking knockout of Antonio Margarito. That's not something you could say about De La Hoya when Pacquiao fought him or Hatton when the Filipino wiped him out. So many elite fighters' legacies are built upon wins over the empty shells of one-time champions. There's nothing empty about Mosley right now. By signing to fight him, Pacquiao would be distinguishing himself as a fighter who truly fears no one. And by beating Mosley, Pacquiao would be distinguishing himself as a fighter who truly should be feared by everyone.

Danger Factor: As we mentioned earlier, Mosley can go wow-for-wow with Pacquiao in terms of speed and power. That spells serious danger. Although Pacquiao is the younger man and has the advantage of being a lefty, enough advantages lie with Mosley that he figures to enter the fight as the favorite. There's a reason that a guy like Mayweather seems so reluctant to face Mosley.

Mosley won't find Pacquiao to be anywhere near as easy to hit as Margarito was, but if Pac-Man does indeed get hit, Mosley is someone you could envision turning his lights out. There's a lot of reward in fighting Sugar Shane, but you can't blame Pacquiao if he decides the risk outweighs it.

Could Mosley do to Pac-Man what he did to Margarito?

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Will It Happen? When Pacquiao trainer Freddie Roach was on ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* in May, he said he'd be interested in the fight, but he wouldn't want Pacquiao to do it at 147 pounds. "It's the best fight style-wise because both guys are fast, they both like to exchange," Roach said. "I would just like to see Shane come down a little bit in weight." Roach suggested a catchweight of 143 or 144 pounds.

Can Mosley still get that low after fighting at 154 for much of the last six years? For the right money, we'd guess Mosley would consider it. But when all of the factors are weighed, this fight simply wouldn't be Pacquiao's first choice. It probably won't happen unless both guys see Plan A, and possibly Plan B, fall through first.

MIGUEL COTTO

4

Enhancing The Legacy: Cotto is one of those opponents who would enhance Pacquiao's legacy a little bit in a lot of different ways. From his popularity, to his nationality, to his size, to the small number on the right side of his record, Cotto has a lot to offer even if he is a highly flawed fighter.

First the popularity: Cotto is a legitimate superstar, one of the most reliable ticket-sellers in boxing alongside Pacquiao and Hatton. As Pacquiao learned against De La Hoya and Hatton, when you beat a guy with a huge, loyal fan base, people tend to notice.

On to the nationality: Pacquiao has been dubbed "The Mexicutioner" for the way he's run roughshod over the best Mexican fighters of recent times. It can't hurt to add his first big-name Puerto Rican to his resume, can it?

Then there's the size: Cotto is a full-fledged welterweight, and when you move up and bump off a pound-for-pound-rated guy a division above you, you tend to get a lot of credit.

And lastly, there's the record: Cotto has only one loss, and there's widespread speculation that it came against a fighter with loaded hand wraps. So in a sense, Cotto is perceived by some fans and experts as undefeated. Pacquiao would be aiming to hand a highly regarded fighter his first controversy-free loss.

Danger Factor: After seeing Cotto cave against Antonio Margarito and struggle mightily against Joshua Clottey, he certainly doesn't look as dangerous as he used to look. Cotto isn't especially fast and will have big problems with Pacquiao's speed. And you have to wonder if his power is diminished at 147 pounds, at least based on the trouble he had hurting Margarito and Clottey. Maybe that won't be relevant against the smaller Pacquiao, but if it is—if Pacquiao can take Cotto's punches—then suddenly the Puerto Rican's biggest advantage is gone.

Certainly, Cotto has the potential to saw Pacquiao in half with bodyshots or turn out his lights with a single left hook to the jaw. But the guess here is that Pacquiao might actually be a slight favorite over the welterweight beltholder right now.

Will It Happen?: As of press time, it seemed entirely possible that this could be the next fight for both men. Cotto needs time—maybe a lot of time—to heal from the cut suffered against Clottey, and Pacquiao wasn't about to commit to anything specific. But Bob Arum, who promotes both fighters, has been throwing out the possibility of Cotto-Pacquiao in November. It's a fight where the risk-reward ratio might be just right for both boxers.

Cotto cleaves Clottey's defense with an uppercut

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

5 EDWIN VALERO

Enhancing The Legacy: It always helps a fighter's legacy when he ruins another fighter's perfect record, and Valero's record is perfect in every sense: 25 fights, 25 victories, 25 knockouts. Boxing isn't a sport where stats and numbers matter all that much, but if you turn 25-0 (25) into 25-1 (25), that turns some heads.

In some regards, beating the Venezuelan phenom Valero doesn't count for all that much. He's somewhat unproven, meaning he could be dismissed as a flash in the pan if Pacquiao scorches him. He's naturally smaller, having just moved up from junior lightweight to lightweight. And it's not a massive event that will sell a million PPVs, because Valero is an unknown in America outside of the hardcore fight fanatics.

On the other hand, it promises to be an all-action battle for as long as it lands, and having an extra Fight-of-the-Year-type war on your resume never hurts when fans and experts look back on your career. And in a weird way, it enhances Pacquiao's legacy because beating Valero demonstrates that he can beat his former self. Valero is a southpaw known for his rocket-launcher left hand, but is somewhat one-dimensional, which is precisely how Pacquiao was viewed a few years back. To stiffen "El Inca" would reinforce just how far Pacquiao has come.

Danger Factor: Realistically, it's hard to give Valero much more than the old puncher's chance. He's demonstrated that if he catches you, he can do damage, no matter who you are, so Pacquiao would have to exhibit some caution. But Pacquiao is such a complete fighter now and Valero is still so flawed (see the angle at which he carries his chin) that the Venezuelan has to be viewed as a long shot. This is a fight where the modest reward for Pacquiao might be acceptable because the risk is modest too.

However, there is some danger to Pac-Man's reputation and legacy if he loses to a relative novice such as Valero. If Valero were to starch him, Pacquiao would see experts wonder if they'd gone overboard praising him for his recent victories.

Valero displays his wide-open slugging style against Antonio Pitalua

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Will It Happen? It's really up to Pacquiao. Valero, obviously, would jump at the chance for a career-high payday against the pound-for-pound king. Pacquiao, however, is focused on making the biggest possible fights, and Valero is a notch below that. So the powerpunching younger man has to hope that Pacquiao's biggest fights can't be made, or that the Filipino will hang around for a couple of years and Pacquiao vs. Valero will mature into a true superfight by then.

ANDRE BERTO

6

Enhancing The Legacy: Pacquiao has made his mark against the generation a few years older than him (De La Hoya, Barrera, Marquez). He's made his mark against the guys roughly his own age (Hatton, Morales, David Diaz). What he hasn't really done yet is turn back the next generation. And one of the prime representatives of that generation is Berto, a 2004 Olympian born five years after Pacquiao.

Very few great fighters succeed against the men significantly younger than they are; more typically, they lose and pass the torch to those boxers. So if Pacquiao could beat someone like Berto, who's currently viewed as one of the best 25-or-under fighters in the sport, it would be a legacy-elevating victory.

Berto is also a bigger man (a full-fledged welterweight) with an unbeaten record, so there are quite a few factors that might cause observers to pick him over Pacquiao. And that, in turn, would make Pac-Man defeating him that much more significant. Simply put, Berto is the sort of not-quite-a-superstar-yet opponent that most fighters in Pacquiao's spot would avoid. And when the resident superstar takes a risk against someone like that, it earns him serious legacy points with the hardcore fans.

Danger Factor: The size and strength of Berto make this a fight Pacquiao could lose, plus Berto's no slouch when it comes to hand speed. There are question marks about the Floridian's chin and defense, and Pacquiao could certainly exploit the latter. Whether he'll have the power at 147 to exploit the former is hard to say. He's carried his punch with him in each weight division so far, but that can't last forever, can it?

In the end, Pacquiao deserves to be favored despite Berto holding edges in size and youth. But the danger for Pac-Man is obvious. Berto just seems like a warrior who'll never give any opponent an easy night.

Will It Happen? It really wouldn't make any sense for Pacquiao in the immediate future. If he's going to fight a welterweight, it'll be one with a huge name, like Mayweather or Mosley. If he's going to fight a lesser known young fighter, Pacquiao would be reluctant to give up poundage, meaning someone like Valero would be more likely to get the fight than Berto.

For this fight to happen, Berto would probably have to establish himself as the man to beat at welterweight first. And that looks like a multi-step process from where Berto is now.

Berto pounded Urango, and his hand speed might not make it easy for Pac-Man

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

7 TIMOTHY BRADLEY

Enhancing The Legacy: Pacquiao is the one and only true junior welterweight champion of the world. He knocked out Hatton, who knocked out Kostya Tszyu, who knocked out Zab Judah to unify all of the belts. There's absolutely no room for argument.

Pacquiao is in a unique situation because he competes in so many weight classes and will move around for the most lucrative and meaningful fights, but all the same, when you're a RING champion, there's a certain amount of obligation to defend against your true number-one contender. And at 140 pounds, that man is "Desert Storm" Bradley.

Granted, nobody's going to hold it against Pacquiao if he keeps hopping from division to division for pay-per-view superfights and doesn't make time for Bradley, who isn't exactly a ticketseller. But if by chance he does make time for Bradley? Then Pacquiao would earn serious credit for being an honorable champion. A successful defense against a talented, undefeated, deserving number-one contender would further legitimize Pac-Man's junior welterweight title. It's one thing to become champion of a division, and it's another thing to take steps toward cleaning that division out.

Danger Factor: Bradley is a fighter who's easy to underestimate. He surprised everyone by beating Junior Witter in England without ever having tackled a real contender previously, and two fights later, he unified two alphabet belts with a tense, hard-fought win over Kendall Holt. Both Witter and Holt are fast, athletic fighters, but Bradley negated their advantages with his own abilities and ring intelligence. He doesn't have a lot of knockouts (11 in 24 fights) and doesn't ooze excitement, so he tends to get overlooked. But he's dangerous.

And he's especially dangerous if Pacquiao takes him lightly. Remember what almost happened when Pac-Man didn't take a homecoming fight against Oscar Larios seriously? Pacquiao on his "A" game should be too much for Bradley, but it's important that he bring that "A" game.

Bradley, THE RING's number-one junior welter contender, connects against Holt

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Will It Happen? Unfortunately for Bradley, this one's a real long shot. What's in it for Pacquiao, other than that extra little bit of credibility from a few crazy hardcore fans for doing the right thing and giving his number-one contender a shot? With all due respect to Desert Storm, this fight isn't anywhere on Pac-Man's radar.

VICTOR ORTIZ

8

Enhancing The Legacy: If Berto represents the next generation after Pacquiao, then Ortiz, at just 22, represents the generation after that. Not only could Pacquiao clean out numerous divisions, but if he takes care of the likes of Berto and "Vicious Victor," he'll be cleaning out numerous generations. Pacquiao would have top fighters born all the way from the early-'70s through the late-'80s on his record, an impressive claim to make and one that would certainly help his standing among the all-time greats.

But Ortiz isn't just young; he's also damned good, and is viewed by many as boxing's potential next big thing. He's exciting with his fists and charming with his mouth, a Kansas-born, California-bred superstar in the making if he keeps winning. And the brighter his star shines, the more he eventually means to Pacquiao's legacy. Imagine what it would have done for Julio Cesar Chavez' standing among the legends if he'd beaten young Oscar De La Hoya. This isn't quite the same thing, since Pacquiao is in his prime (Chavez was fading fast by 1996) and Ortiz isn't one-tenth as famous as "The Golden Boy" was. But the principle is the same, in that Pacquiao would be adding to his own glow by snuffing out the flame of a young star on the rise.

And don't forget how Ortiz snubbed Bob Arum to sign with none other than De La Hoya as his promoter. Arum now promotes Pacquiao, making this a grudge match of sorts. Maybe history won't really care if Pacquiao gets revenge on his promoter's behalf, but hey, an extra plotline or two never hurts.

Danger Factor: It's hard to tell just how good Ortiz is. (He had a dangerous fight against Marcos Maidana scheduled after our press deadline, so you might have a better sense by the time you read this.) If he's as special as he looked in his last two fights, against Mike Arnaoutis and Jeffrey Resto, then he's a threat to Pacquiao. If those fights were deceptively flattering and he has major flaws that haven't been exposed yet, then Pacquiao will undoubtedly expose them.

Ultimately, Pacquiao would be a solid favorite in this fight if it were signed tomorrow, but the exact level of danger Ortiz presents is unclear until further evidence comes in.

Will It Happen? Not anytime soon. This is a fight that needs to build; Ortiz needs to make a name for himself, and Pacquiao needs to still be around when that time comes. For Ortiz, the ideal scenario is one that really does closely resemble De La Hoya-Chavez, with the younger man having another two or three years of experience under his belt and Pacquiao having started to wear down. The relevant question will be whether Pacquiao can get out of the sport before he declines and becomes a steppingstone.

Ortiz makes quick work of Resto

PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

9 HUMBERTO SOTO

Enhancing The Legacy: To be perfectly honest, Soto does less for Pacquiao's legacy than anyone else on this list. He's not a superstar. He's not undefeated. He's not a bigger man—in fact, he's two divisions smaller at the moment.

But Soto has one thing going for him: He's a true blue-collar boxer who's paid his dues and deserves a payday. If Pacquiao fought him, Soto would be his Rocky Balboa in a sense, and when you give a Rocky Balboa a shot, as long as it isn't a gross mismatch, you earn a little extra respect.

And Pacquiao-Soto is definitely not a gross mismatch. Soto is a damned good little fighter who can do a little bit of everything. He's beaten legitimate contenders Rocky Juarez, Humberto Toledo, and Gamaliel Diaz, not to mention that he has a guy named Bobby Pacquiao on his resume. That certainly adds a layer of intrigue, with Pac-Man trying to avenge one of his brother's defeats.

Pacquiao-Soto isn't a superfight, it wouldn't sell big on pay-per-view (though with Pacquiao's currently popularity, it would probably do okay), but it's the kind of fight that makes you respect Manny for giving the "common man" a chance. If the pound-for-pound king is looking for a safe, keep-busy fight, this is one that would actually do a little something for legacy.

Danger Factor: We did just call this a "safe, keep-busy fight," so we can't very well reverse course and argue that Soto presents real danger. He doesn't. He's arguably the best 130-pounder in the world, but that doesn't count for much against the best 140-pounder in the world. His only chances are (a) Pacquiao completely undertrains for him, or (b) Pacquiao agrees to come back down to 135 pounds and *overtrains* for him.

But realistically, this is a fight Pacquiao wins 999 times out of 1,000.

Soto en route to fourth-round TKO of Antonio

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Will It Happen? It's unlikely, but not impossible, if indeed Pacquiao decides sometime in the next year or so that he needs a break from the superfights and the *24/7* cameras and wants to just go through the motions for a change with a marking-time fight. Maybe he'll want to fight in the Philippines (which he hasn't done since 2006) and wants to do so against someone he can't lose to. If that were his aim, then Soto would be the perfect choice.

KELLY PAVLIK

10

Enhancing The Legacy: You think beating Mayweather would enhance Pacquiao's standing among the legends of the sport? You think it would make waves if he moved up and out-dueled Mosley? Those are insignificant achievements compared to Pacquiao defeating Pavlik and claiming the middleweight championship of the world.

Henry Armstrong, the icon to whom Pacquiao has been most frequently compared in recent years, nearly pulled off this feat, battling to a controversial draw against middleweight champ Ceferino Garcia (and weighing a Pacquiao-like 142 pounds for the fight). Can you imagine if Pacquiao could do him one better and actually win the 160-pound championship? Giving away eight inches in height and three years in age, no less?

Even if Pavlik annihilates him in the first round, Pacquiao would earn points just for trying. But if he somehow won the fight—and before you say it's impossible, let's recall how many of you said he was too small to have a chance against De La Hoya—it might honestly be time for Armstrong and Robinson to step aside. Is that blasphemy? Perhaps in the minds of some. But consider how absurd it *should* be for a flyweight, junior featherweight, featherweight, junior lightweight, lightweight, and junior welterweight titlist to become the undisputed middleweight champion of the world. To do that, Pacquiao would either have to be fighting in the weakest era in boxing history, or he'd have to be one of the top two or three fighters the sport has ever known.

Danger Factor: Needless to say, the danger is enormous. We're guessing the sports books would have Pacquiao at about a 5-1 underdog, maybe worse. And he'd be putting his health at serious risk. Pavlik is a huge puncher with at least a 20-pound weight advantage. Great fighters take chances, but this would be pushing the limits.

That said, Pacquiao *could* win. He's so fast with his hands and his feet, he might be able to stay out of trouble and score repeatedly against the relatively easy-to-hit Pavlik. The Filipino's speed often handcuffs a slower man, and if he fights a perfect fight, as he did against De La Hoya, then he could even prevail in one-sided fashion. It's not the most likely scenario, but it's within the bounds of reason.

Pavlik would certainly have more trouble with Pacquiao than he did Marco Antonio Rubio

PHOTO BY GARY SARTI/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Will It Happen? Don't count on it. First, Pacquiao might not want to fight a guy that big, no matter how well it pays or how much it could do for his legacy. Second, Pavlik might not want to fight a guy that small because it's a no-win situation. And third, promoter Bob Arum might not want to risk two of his biggest meal tickets against each other. He could probably make more money matching them against separate opponents without taking a gamble on Pavlik physically ruining Pacquiao or Pacquiao ruining Pavlik's reputation. ■

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REALITY VS. EXPECTATION

How Berto And Cintron Confounded Conventional Wisdom

Both Berto and Cintron prevailed in recent bouts that didn't go according to the expectations of many. Berto easily outpointed Juan Urango (above) but failed to impress. Cintron surprised a lot of people by outpointing Alfredo Angulo (left), but should it really have been considered an upset?

By William Dettloff

From the smile on his face, you would have thought Kermit Cintron had knocked two-time tormentor Antonio Margarito through the ropes and into the lap of Margarito's promoter and chief apologist, Bob Arum. He hadn't. Rather, he'd just outpointed Alfredo Angulo over 12 rounds.

For all his stone-faced Mexican machismo, Angulo is a far cry from Margarito, doctored wraps or not, and not only hadn't Cintron knocked him through the ropes, he had rather labored toward the finish line while Angulo chased him around the ring. No matter. On this night, a win would do.

In the ring, moments after the decision was announced in his favor, Cintron wore the kind of smile that overcomes a man who has been underestimated by other men whose opinions he fears are right, and

PHOTOS BY JEFF JULIAN

Many thought previously undefeated slugger Angulo would make Cintron his 16th consecutive victim, but he met stiff resistance from Cintron, who turned in one of his best performances. The former IBF welterweight titleholder utilized movement, sharp counterpunching, and boxing skills to thwart the Mexican slugger's attack and win a unanimous decision by triple scores of 116-112.

who, through some accident of luck or nature, proves them wrong.

It was the smile of sweet redemption and this was the angle, aided by Cintron himself, on to which the many surprised onlookers at ringside latched as their deadlines approached. He had exceeded expectations. Angulo had not. In a short while, it would be Andre Berto's turn.

"This is one of my best performances to date in my career," Cintron said after judges Michael Pernick, Mike Ross, and Rocky Young all turned in scores of 116-112 (THE RING had it a bit closer for Cintron at 116-114). "I think I showed I could fight tonight. I had to fight my best and I did. I still feel I could become a world champion."

You know what he wanted to say: *I proved you bastards wrong.* But did he?

The stock and financial markets aren't the only businesses that live and die on their ability to create and manage expectations that may or may not have anything to do with reality. The sporting world, too, must play on the happily malleable minds of its many enthusiasts, and there may be no more skilled manipulators in this regard than those that are found in the boxing business.

Promoters, managers, writers, cable network suits of all stripe, and the fighters, too, know what makes good business and what doesn't. They know what stories sell and what no one will buy no matter how strenuously it's peddled, and they know that there's a certain rhythm and pattern to the events that play out in sport and in life.

We all like stories where the poor boy becomes rich (but not too rich), where the torch gets passed, where the corrupt or broken spirit is redeemed, where the underdog wins, and where the star is on his way that will make everything all right again.

With each bigger fight, our expectations are groomed toward one or several of these themes. Sometimes they play out. Sometimes they don't. When they don't, you often can just substitute one for another. If one doesn't fit exactly, you make it fit.

So on a May 30 HBO's *Boxing After Dark* show that fittingly took place in Florida, home of Disney World, the greatest purveyor of family-oriented escapism fantasy known to middle-class man, Angulo and Berto entered the ring to similarly high expectations; Angulo against Cintron, Berto against Juan Urango.

Both had been lovingly hyped and stroked by HBO, which deserves credit for its passionate dedication to finding and marketing the sport's next stars, even if it can be accused on occasion of being willing to help manufacture them in the absence of the real thing. Certainly they are not alone in this practice. In this business, everyone does it.

One imagines HBO brass is still smarting over the apparent loss of James Kirkland, who at this writing re-

PHOTOS BY JAVIER CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Although Urango applied steady pressure, Berto kept his foe at long range for much of the fight, using lateral movement and an accurate left jab to control the action. But Berto also did a lot of holding, which didn't endear him to the fans and critics.

PHOTOS BY JAVIER CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Angulo mounted a strong rally down the stretch to have the weary Cintron under serious pressure. But instead of falling apart, as many believe he would, Cintron held off his adversary's late charge to emerge victorious and revitalize his career.

mained jailed over a weapons charge. Kirkland was the third and maybe the most promising of the three young talents HBO's marketing gurus were hyping, along with Angulo and Berto. So it fell on the latter two in Florida to meet expectations. Alas, they failed, but to different degrees and in different ways. And it may be that Cintron exceeded expectations, but only because the expectations for Angulo were skewed.

Indeed, shouldn't Cintron, a 34-fight veteran, former IBF welterweight beltholder, and still young at just 29, have been expected to beat Angulo, a relative novice? Did Cintron redeem himself, as was the theme to which everyone gravitated post fight, or did he just beat a fighter in Angulo who wasn't ready for him?

"I didn't see it as an upset at all," Cintron's promoter, Lou DiBella, told

PHOTO BY ROB LOUD/GETTY IMAGES

Berto, pictured posing with* Heroes *actor Jimmy Jean-Louis and singer Melky Jean, has been enjoying an increasingly high public profile. The big question is whether or not his fighting ability is equal to his growing celebrity.

THE RING. "Kermit was a little underrated going in and Angulo was overrated. People like to see Angulo because he throws a lot of punches and he's exciting, but he's a one-dimensional guy."

DiBella noted that virtually all of the prefight coverage centered on Angulo, while Cintron was treated as a virtual nonentity. This could be forgiven to some degree. In their previous outings, Angulo looked excellent cave-manning his way to a stoppage win over veteran Cosme Rivera, while Cintron was extremely lucky to get a draw against Sergio Martinez. But the difference between Rivera and Martinez approximates the difference between a 1978 Dodge Dart and a 2009 Lexus. Why didn't prefight coverage reflect this?

"Because Alfredo Angulo had been preordained as the next superstar," said DiBella. "Him, Berto, and Kirkland were being packaged by HBO as the next superstars of the sport. He was pre-ordained."

For the first couple of rounds, it appeared Angulo, 15-1 (12), would live up to the high expectations created for him. Though Cintron found him easily with jabs and right hands, "Perro" snorted right through the blows and rattled Cintron with rights of his own. In the second round particularly, Cintron, 31-2-1 (27), got the same look on his face that he had during the disasters against Margarito, as Angulo pressured him and made Cintron, 153, fight off his back foot. It must have felt like the worst déjà vu.

To his credit, Cintron didn't wilt. He turned things around over the middle rounds, moving and outboxing Angulo, 153½, from the outside. Still, except for a moment in the fourth when he staggered his man, Cintron seemed unable to hurt the Coachella, California, resident. This was a frequent source of amazement to the HBO broadcast team, whose Max Kellerman, after noting that PunchStat numbers credited Cintron with landing 68 powerpunches, observed: "If Kermit Cintron hits you 68 times, you shouldn't have a face anymore."

Nevertheless, over the last couple of rounds, Cintron, Reading, Pennsylvania, slowed down precipitously and took to frequent holding, despite the exhortations of cornerman Ronnie Shields. This allowed Angulo to mount a late rush and steal his way back into the fight. By the end Cintron was clearly struggling to hang on, and though some would see that as a failure of conditioning, emotion, or both, in this game, even more than most, everything is relative.

"If that's fading, then Jermain Taylor should take lessons from Kermit Cin-

tron on fading," DiBella said, referring to his fighter Taylor's disastrous late-round collapse against Carl Froch in April. *Touché!*

Berto, 25-0 (19), suffered no such drama defending the WBC welterweight title against 140-pound IBF titleholder Urango, but employed largely the same tactics that Ricky Hatton did when he faced Urango, originally from Monterria, Colombia, in January 2007: Punch and hold. Repeat.

Such is the effect of Urango's strength and left-handed awkwardness that more gifted fighters are content enough to outpoint him and look good next time.

Urango, 21-2-1 (16), clipped Berto, of Miami, with enough early-round right hooks that Berto felt the smaller man's punch and decided he would be best served to avoid the kind of toe-to-toe fight he undertook last time out against the less brutish Luis Collazo in January. As a result, Berto, 146½, mostly stunk out the joint as he led Urango, 145¾, on a merry chase interrupted every so often by stinging punches and clinches.

HBO's Harold Lederman argued strongly for referee Tommy Kimmons to penalize Berto for the repeated clinching, a move that would have been welcome by the 4,000 or so fans at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. Kimmons settled for nagging Berto about it, but like just about every other referee seemed mightily disinclined to do anything further.

Judges Alejandro Mapula, Raul Nieves, and Michael Pernick scored it 118-110 (twice) and 117-111, respectively, in Berto's favor (THE RING scored it 117-111), but few outside Berto himself saw the performance as praise-worthy.

"He ran around all night against a much smaller guy and looked bad," longtime promoter Mike Acri told THE RING. Acri is best known for stewarding the barnstorming later careers of Roberto Duran and Hector Camacho, which qualifies him as something of an expert in the area of fan expectation.

Commenting on the few postfight media accounts that praised Berto, Acri said, "What did he look great doing? He won every round, but he didn't look good to me. It's false hype."

Would the generally lukewarm reaction to Berto's performance have been more positive if expectations for him weren't so high? There are those who would like to market him as the second coming of Ray Leonard, and on some level you can see the parallels. He is fast and skilled, articulate and confident without being especially boastful, and he comes from a good family. He has a wide smile and engaging personality. But this was clearly not a Leonard-like performance.

Predictably, DiBella was more forgiving of his fighter's performance than were many others and seemed incredulous that his fighter was being criticized after all but shutting out a world-class opponent.

"Andre just came off a fight that no one expected to be a war, the one with Collazo," he said. "They beat the hell out of each other, and afterward everyone said he made the fight harder than it had to be. He didn't want that same kind of war again. He didn't make the fight [against Urango] pleasing, but he made it easy. And he still gets criticized."

American politicians know better than anyone the power of expectations. Before important debates, they over-praise the debating skill of their opponent to media so that, come the big night, even their smallest successes seem impressive. Following that kind of thinking, perhaps rather than Leonard, Berto should be marketed as the second coming of Buddy McGirt or Harold Weston. There are worse things.

In the meantime, we'll continue to struggle against those whose job it is to manage our expectations, even if we know it is a losing battle. The story lines exist as they do because they work. We are largely helpless against their themes, given that they are universal and that we are a deeply flawed but ever-hopeful species. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try. ■

PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

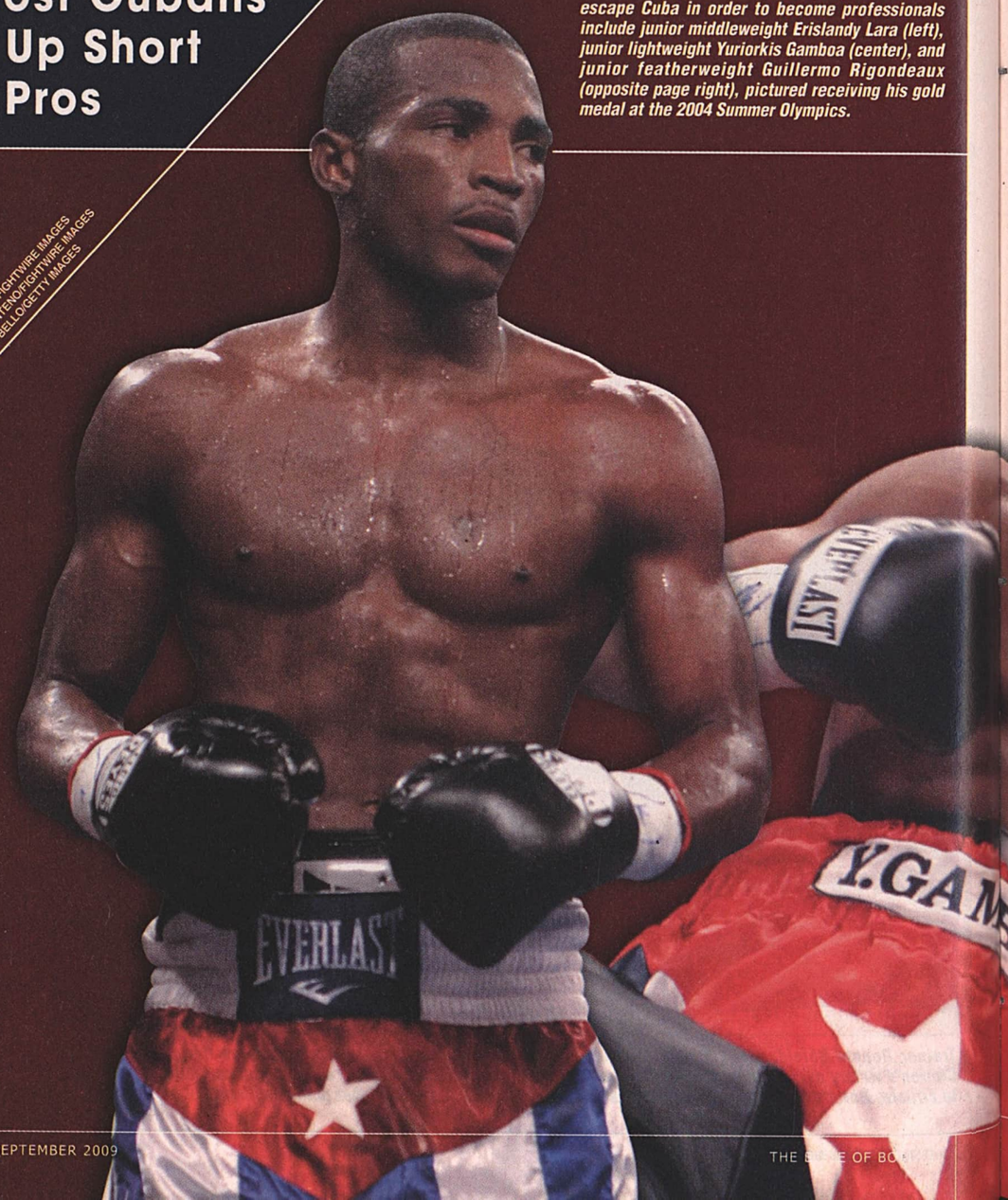
Trainer Ronnie Shields (far left) and Cintron look on as promoter Lou DiBella addresses the media following Cintron's victory over Angulo. DiBella said he wasn't surprised by Cintron's big win and that he thought it was unfair to criticize Berto's performance, especially as Berto was trying to avoid another punishing fight.

THE IMPERFECT DEFECTORS

Why Most Cubans Come Up Short In The Pros

The leading lights of the latest group of boxers to escape Cuba in order to become professionals include junior middleweight Erislandy Lara (left), junior lightweight Yuriorkis Gamboa (center), and junior featherweight Guillermo Rigondeaux (opposite page right), pictured receiving his gold medal at the 2004 Summer Olympics.

LARA: PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES
GAMBOA: PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES
RIGONDEAUX: PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

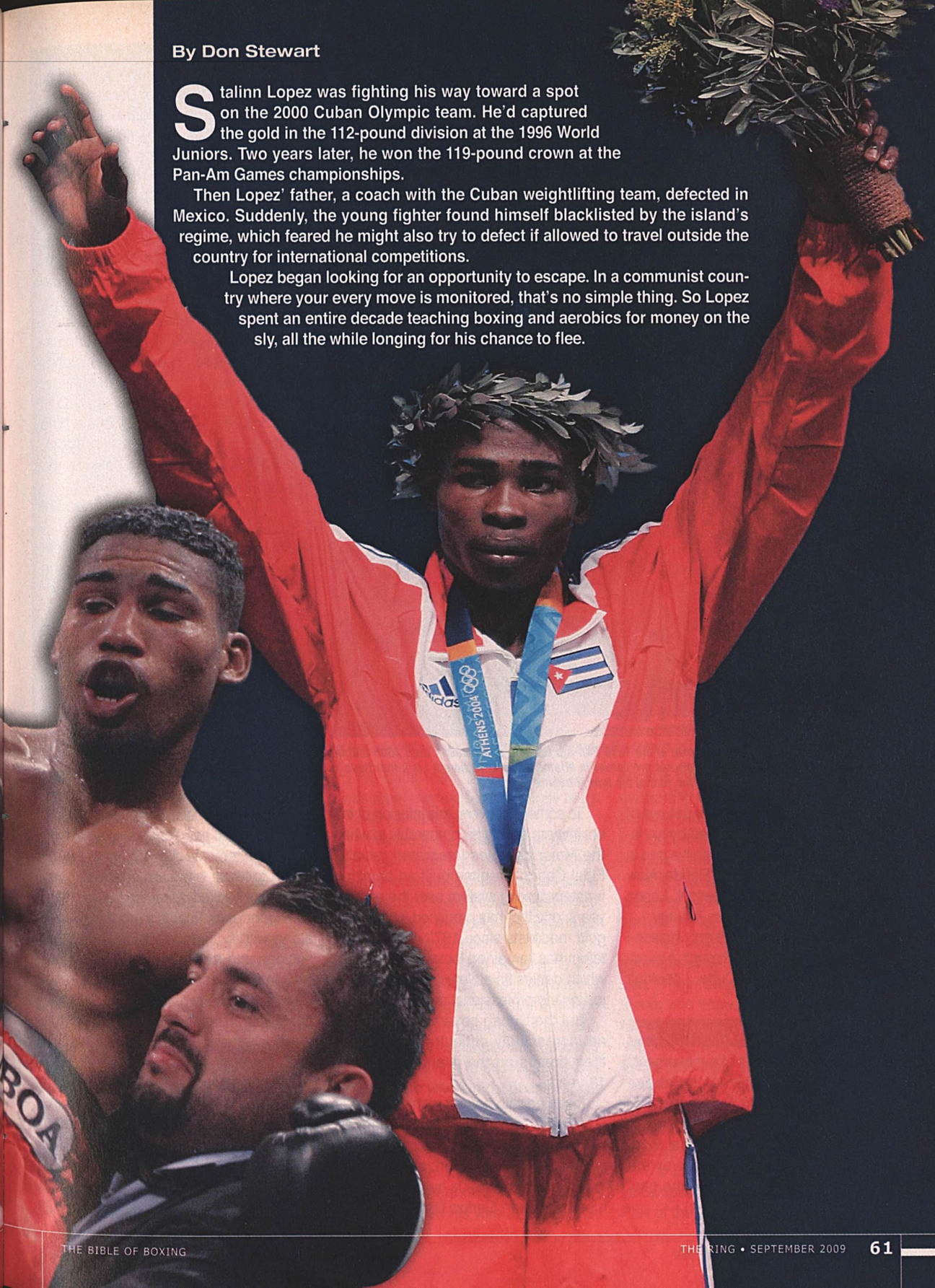


By Don Stewart

Stalinn Lopez was fighting his way toward a spot on the 2000 Cuban Olympic team. He'd captured the gold in the 112-pound division at the 1996 World Juniors. Two years later, he won the 119-pound crown at the Pan-Am Games championships.

Then Lopez' father, a coach with the Cuban weightlifting team, defected in Mexico. Suddenly, the young fighter found himself blacklisted by the island's regime, which feared he might also try to defect if allowed to travel outside the country for international competitions.

Lopez began looking for an opportunity to escape. In a communist country where your every move is monitored, that's no simple thing. So Lopez spent an entire decade teaching boxing and aerobics for money on the sly, all the while longing for his chance to flee.



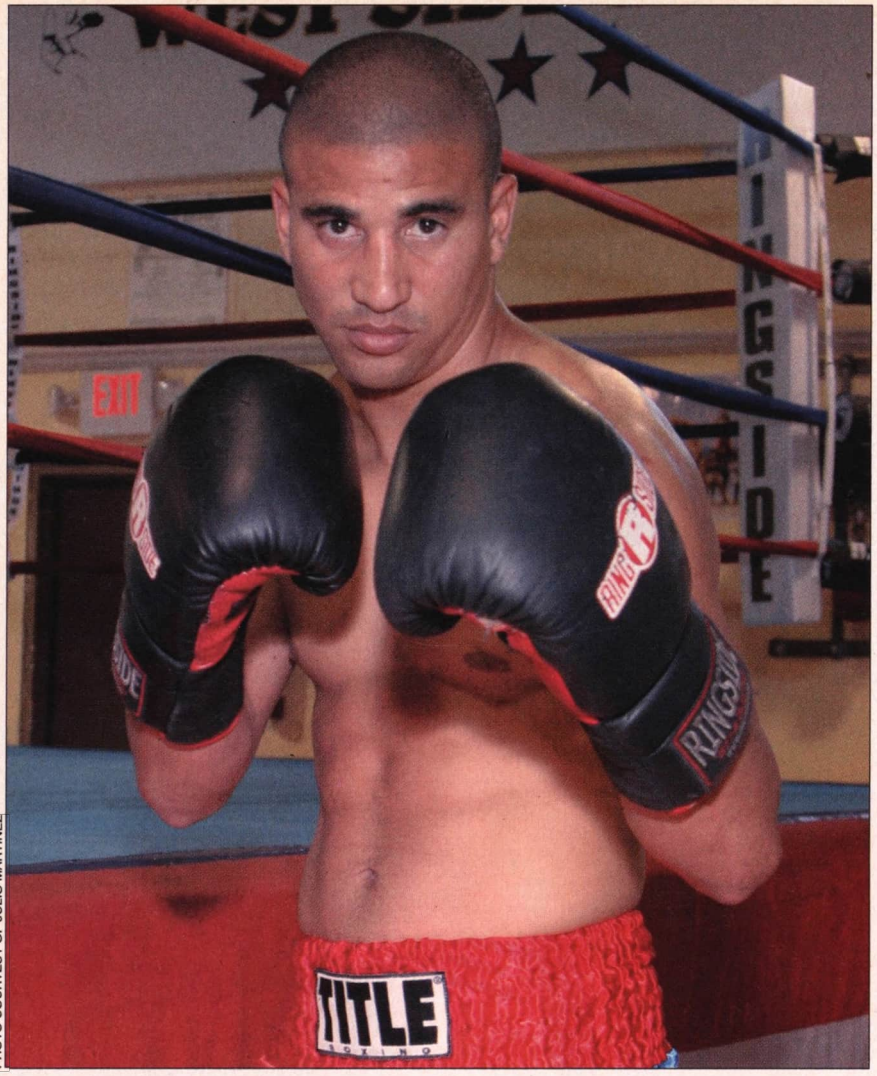


PHOTO COURTESY OF JULIO MARTINEZ

Stalinn Lopez won the 119-pound crown at the 1998 Pan-Am Games, but it wasn't until 2008 that he finally managed to flee Cuba and begin his pro career in Miami, Florida. Although his father lives in the U.S., Lopez was forced to leave the rest of his family behind in Cuba.

Finally, last August, Lopez got out of Cuba on a speedboat arranged by his father. He spent two months with his dad in Mexico before ending up in Florida. Now a 31-year-old junior welterweight, Lopez finally made his pro debut in January.

"The money was not the only reason I left," Lopez, 3-0 (2), said through a translator. "I love boxing. In Cuba, I couldn't box anymore."

The New Wave

Lopez feels he's part of a movement.

As of June 3, Internet database BoxRec.com listed 40 Cuban pros. At the core of those two score fighters is a recent wave of former national team members that has crashed over the decks of the pro game during the past 2½ years.

To some observers, this infusion of talent into pro boxing is comparable to when the Major Leagues integrated racially. Fidel Castro's regime built an amazing amateur boxing system over the past 50 years, one that has produced 32 Olympic gold medalists since 1972. Most of that talent has remained locked up in Cuba, which denies its athletes the freedom of joining the professional ranks.

But the Cuban government has had an increasingly difficult time keeping their boxers on the island in the past 18 years.

It started with heavyweight Jorge Luis Gonzalez, a two-time Pan-American Games champ who defected at an event in Finland in 1991. Gonzalez was followed in the mid-1990s by national team members Juan Carlos Gomez, Ramon Garbey, Diosbelys Hurtado, and Joel Casamayor. There were also several less distinguished amateurs or Cuba-born Floridians who learned to fight in the United States. Together, many of these "first wave" Cubans formed a Miami-based stable known as Team Freedom.

Of that group, only Casamayor, who defected just before the '96 Atlanta Games, had competed in the Olympics, having won gold in Barcelona in '92. With a world lightweight title and a few alphabet belts on his resume, Casamayor clearly has had the most pro success.

The more recent wave of Cuban defectors, however, is of a much higher caliber. "These current Cuban fighters, they're all decorated guys," said Luis DeCubas Sr., a Cuban expatriate who helped put together Team Freedom. "They are all first-tier. That's basically the Olympic team."

The current Cuban invasion began in December '06 when Olympic gold medalists Yuriorkis Gamboa, Odlanier Solis, and Yan Barthelemy defected in Venezuela while training for the Pan-Am Games.

In 2007, heavyweight Ismaikel "Mike" Perez, 8-0 (6), defected to Ireland. He was followed the following year by bantamweight Alexei Acosta, 5-0 (5), and super middleweight Luis Garcia, 5-0 (4). All three were world junior champions.

Erislandy Lara, a 2005 world champ, escaped Cuba on his second try in early-'08. Guillermo Rigondeaux, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and two-time world champion, had been caught with Lara on their first attempt in July '07. He was supposed to leave with Lara on the second break, but backed out at the last minute.

Rigondeaux finally got out of Cuba, along with cruiserweight Yordanis Despaigne and middleweight Yudel Johnson, in February. Despaigne is a 2004 Olympian and a two-time World Championships bronze medalist, while Johnson won a silver at the '04 Games.

The group also includes several recent defectors with solid credentials who have received less attention. This includes Lopez, two-time national champ Angelo Santana, 5-0 (4), former amateur star Lester Gonzalez, 10-0 (6), and 2000 world junior champ Luis Franco, who has yet to make his pro debut.

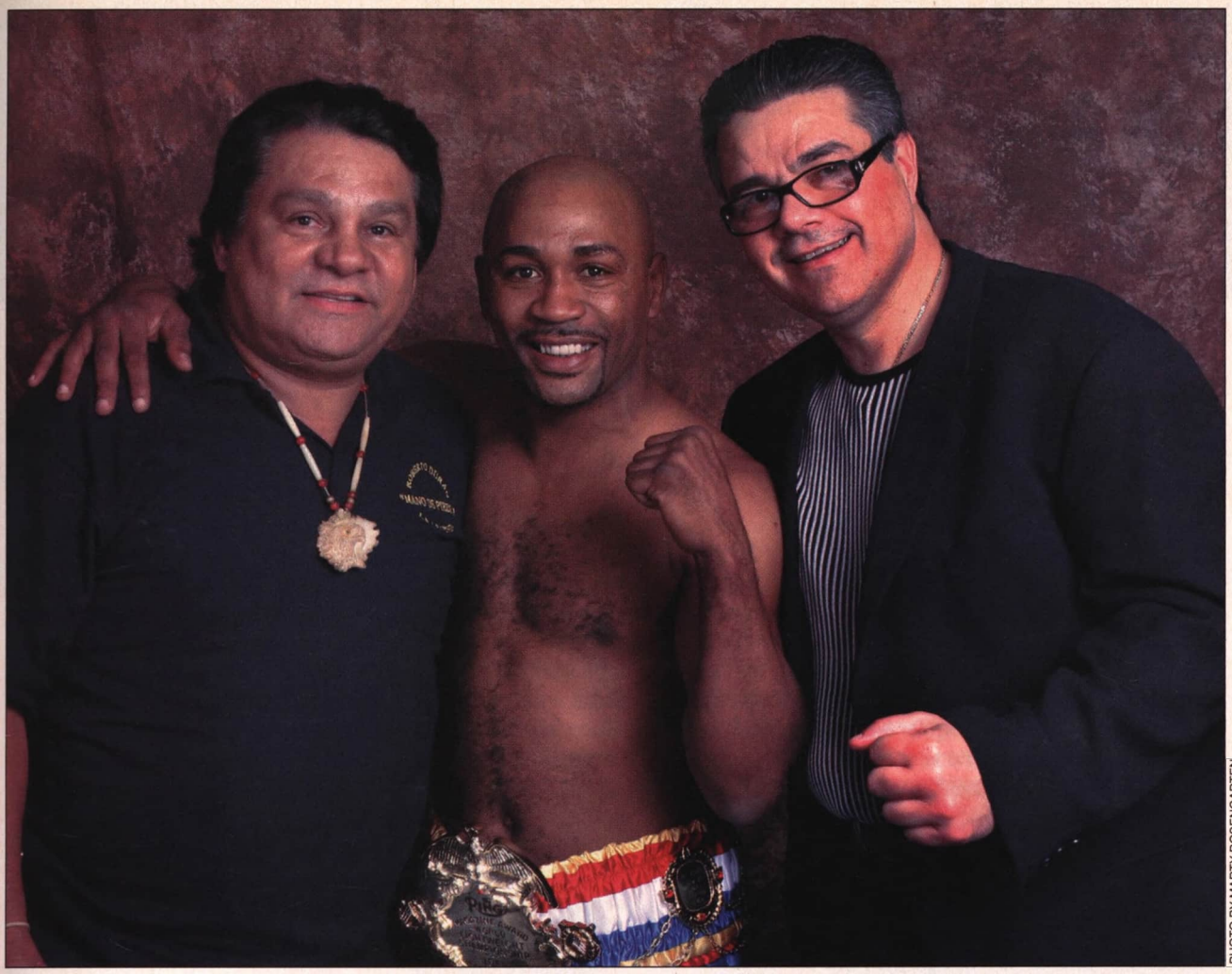


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Of all the Cuban fighters who came to the United States in the mid-1990s, former lightweight world champion Joel Casamayor has been the most successful. He is pictured with all-time great Roberto Duran and promoter Luis DeCubas Sr., who has been involved in the careers of numerous Cuban boxers.

The flood of Cuban talent into the pro ranks is reminiscent of the days following Castro's rise to power. At that time, several standouts fled the island, including Hall of Famers Jose Napoles, Luis Rodriguez, and Sugar Ramos, along with Florentino Fernandez, Benny Paret, Jose Legra, and Angel Robinson Garcia.

"The level of the fighters who have recently defected is the best crop of Cuban boxers who have turned pro since the Cuban invasion of the early-'60s," said former amateur boxer Enrique Encinosa, a BoxRec editor and the author of *Sugar And Chocolate: A History Of Cuban Boxing*.

"This is the best crop since then."

Perilous Leap

When he escaped Cuba, Lopez had to leave behind a family that included his wife, two children, mother, and sister. He calls them once a week and sends them money, but constantly fears for their well-being.

"It was tough because I left my family," Lopez said of his escape. "But the decision was tough and not tough at the same time because I knew I could make it outside of Cuba in the sport I've dominated since I was 12 years old."

Overall, though, the decision to defect is never an easy one. There's the obvious fear of getting caught, which usually results in being kicked off the boxing team. There is also the daunting prospect of having to assimilate into a foreign culture where most people speak a different language.

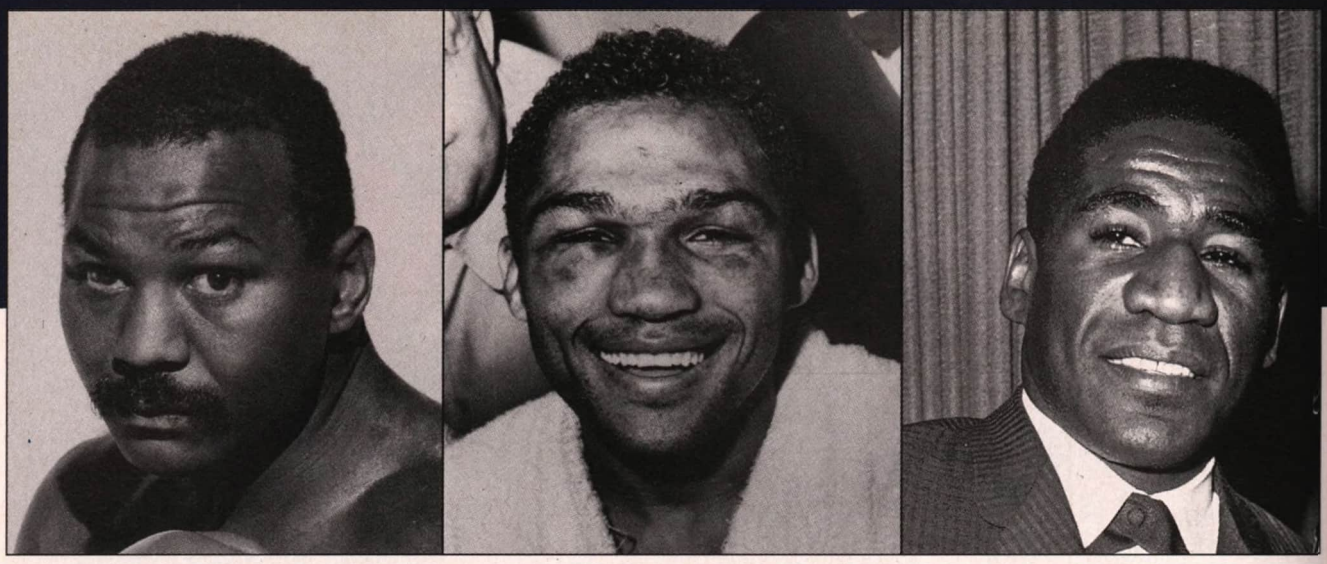
Luis DeCubas Jr., the co-manager of Lara, said the biggest sacrifice the defectors make is leaving their families behind. Some fighters such as Gamboa, who helped his wife and daughter escape five months after he defected, eventually are able to pay to get their families out. But while relatives remain in Cuba, there is always fear of harsh treatment from the regime.

Still, Cuban amateurs have been increasingly willing to accept these risks and sacrifices.

"They've seen what happened to the generations before them," DeCubas Jr. said. "They saw guys who were great amateurs who ended up with nothing. They figure, if we don't take advantage of our opportunity now, we'll end up in poverty for the rest of our lives."

Not long ago, defecting required seeking asylum at an international competition, or escaping on a makeshift raft. Now, it's all about cash and connections.

The black market system was excellently documented in March by Gerhard Pfeil of the German news magazine *Der*



The old guard: Jose Napoles (left), Sugar Ramos (center), and Luis Rodriguez (right) all began their careers in Cuba, but left when Fidel Castro came to power, in order to continue to fight for pay. All three won world championships and are now enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Spiegel. Promoters such as Germany's Ahmet Öner, who has nine Cuban fighters in his Arena Box stable, have contacts in Havana who pass the word along after being informed that a fighter wants to leave. Contracts are done via middlemen, usually before the fighter escapes. Through associates, the promoters then pay for the fighter to be smuggled out by escape agents in Cuba and smugglers in Mexico who use speedboats to move their human cargo. Bribes are often paid to members of the Cuban coast guard and the Mexican police.

Most defectors who flee via these networks won't talk about their escape, mostly due to fear of additional troubles for their families back in Cuba. Lopez

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

German promoter Ahmet Öner (center) has a number of the top Cuban prospects in his stable, including (clockwise from the left) Odlander Solis, Pedro Carrion, Yan Barthelemy, and Gamboa. Öner, through his contacts in Cuba, was instrumental in helping them get out of their homeland and launch pro careers.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Undefeated slugger Gamboa on the attack against Jose "Cheo" Rojas, who was stopped in the 10th round of their April 2009 bout in Primm, Nevada. Due to his exciting, hard-hitting style, Gamboa is the best known of the latest Cuban crop, but he has shown defensive weaknesses and a questionable chin,

simply said his father arranged for him to leave on a boat. In an April interview with 15rounds.com, Acosta only said he departed on "a dream ship."

It's a crash course in the powers and pitfalls of capitalism for young men brought up knowing only a communist system. The fighters are driven by economic interests of their own, of course, though money isn't always the only motivation.

"I box because I love this game, which is my life," said Lopez, who did not receive a signing bonus from a promoter upon defecting. "If I can make money to send to my family, that's a plus. But this sport is the only thing that I do well."

Top Of The Class

Of the current crop of Cubans, it's Gamboa, Solis, Lara, and Rigondeaux who stand out as the best bets for future stardom.

Out of the group, Gamboa has generated the most electricity thus far. While that's partially due to having turned pro earlier than some of his compatriots, the 27-year-old featherweight's power, fast hands, crowd-pleasing style, and charisma haven't hurt.

Gamboa, 15-0 (13), has already fought twice on HBO and won an "interim" belt. But he's also been dropped four times as a pro.

"Everybody's talking about Gamboa," Encinosa said. "I think Gamboa is going to make a lot of money and is going to be a titleholder. But he has flaws, enormous flaws, that make him a beatable fighter."

Heavyweight hopeful Solis, 13-0 (9), turned pro on the same night as Gamboa. The 29-year-old has beaten several experienced big men, yet he's failed to generate the same amount of buzz as Gamboa, partially due to some tepid performances sparked by weight issues.

"I think he has tremendous potential because he's in a division that's very weak," Encinosa said. "But he seems to like his hamburgers a lot. He needs to lose 20, 30 pounds. As a chubby fighter, he's not impressive."

"Solis is a work in progress," DeCubas Jr. said. "But I think he's a guy who can surprise anyone in the heavyweight division."

Not surprisingly, DeCubas Jr. thinks the most potential lies in his man Lara, 6-0 (4). He might be right.

The 26-year-old junior middleweight has shown signs of being an excellent technical fighter as a pro. He reportedly beat up Ricky Hatton in sparring before Hatton's May 2 loss to Manny Pacquiao. Lara, a southpaw, then went on to post an impressive four-round win against Chris Gray on the Pacquiao-Hatton undercard.

"He looks like the complete package," DeCubas Jr. said.

No Cuban has defected with the amateur credentials of the southpaw Rigondeaux, however. As one of the island's six two-time Olympic champions, the 28-year-old junior featherweight is listed among the top Cuban amateurs of all-time.

"The thing is, he is very clever," trainer Freddie Roach told Dan Rafael of ESPN.com. "He's very elusive and he punches with both hands. He caught me on the tip of the nose with a right hook by accident. I could feel the power and

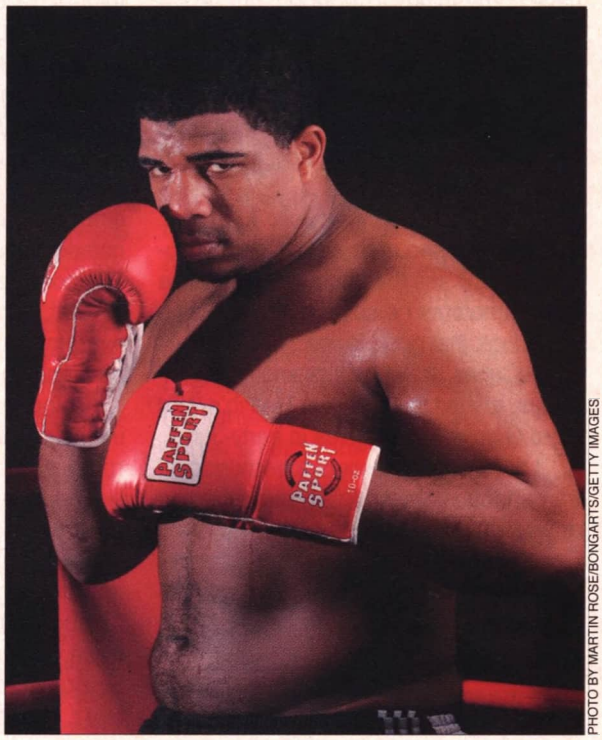
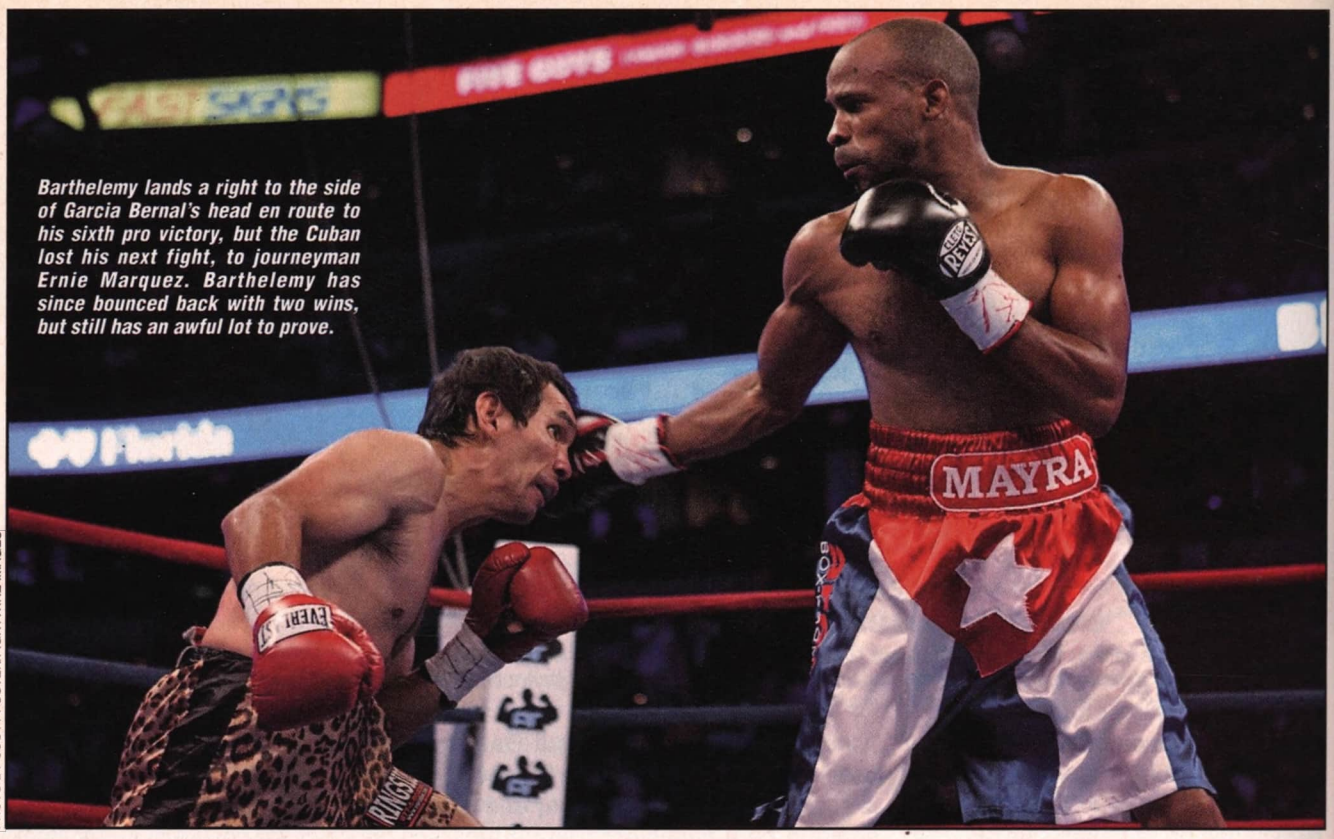


PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Solis won the heavyweight gold medal at the 2004 Olympics and is undefeated as a professional, but his flabby physique and often lackadaisical approach have people wondering if he will live up to expectations. Like some other Cuban defectors, he apparently has trouble combining his newfound freedom with the discipline required to reach the top.



Barthelemy lands a right to the side of Garcia Bernal's head en route to his sixth pro victory, but the Cuban lost his next fight, to journeyman Ernie Marquez. Barthelemy has since bounced back with two wins, but still has an awful lot to prove.

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

he didn't even catch me that good. We have some things to work on, but he's a talented kid."

Rigondeaux made his pro debut May 22, along with Despaigne and Johnson. Facing terrified late-sub Juan Noriega, Rigondeaux looked average in picking up a third-round TKO.

"I was shocked," said Julio Martinez, the Miami-based manager of Stalinn Lopez. "I didn't see that much talent. Maybe in the amateurs he could make it, but he didn't look that good to me."

DeCubas Sr., who co-promotes Rigondeaux, rushed the fighter to Roach's Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles in early-June.

"I think Rigondeaux is a tremendous, tremendous fighter. He's proven it as an amateur," said DeCubas Sr., who hired Roach to train Rigondeaux and Johnson. "I'm not gonna play around with a guy like Rigondeaux. I've got more experience in this business now."

Tough Transitions

Boxing is a sport largely built on hype and hyperbole, but because they come with the mystique of being products of the world's top amateur system, it's only natural to raise the bar for Cuban fighters.

It's also tough not to be impressed by their experience. Rigondeaux's amateur record has been reported as a barely believable 243-4. Solis is said to have been 227-14, while Gamboa reportedly had more than 250 amateur fights.

It's not just the number of fights, however. Many of those bouts come against other seasoned Cubans or in international competitions. "Their level of experience," Encinosa said, "is tremendous."

Still, coming up through the Cuban system can be almost as much curse as blessing.

Being immersed for so many years in the amateur style can make for a rocky adjustment to the pro game. It's like being faithfully married for 20 years, then having to figure out how to date again. "Transferring from amateur to pro is a big, big difference," Martinez said. "Some of them can do it, and some of them can't adapt."

Bodypunching can be an issue. Martinez, who also worked with Team Freedom back in the 1990s, said many former Cuban amateurs only want to target the head, where in the amateurs it was easiest to score points. "They're all similar," Encinosa said, "in the sense that they don't know how to fight inside."

There's also the issue of getting them to put leverage on their punches. Like other successful amateurs, many Cuban standouts want to continue raining torrents of light punches at their opponents, often from a distance. DeCubas Sr., who has been a part of Gamboa's American team, said bringing in the experienced Ismael Salas last year to train Gamboa has made a difference in the fighter. He hopes getting the highly respected Roach to help transition Rigondeaux will prove just as fruitful.

"You have to adjust the training," DeCubas Sr. said. "You gotta get them sitting down on their punches. You gotta get them hurting people. If you don't sit down on your punches and hurt the guy coming forward, you're not gonna make it as a pro."

All those years of experience can hurt in other ways. Amateurs wear headgear and engage in shorter bouts, but there can still be a wear-and-tear factor, especially among those who defect later into their 20s.

An example of a worn-down fighter could be Barthelemy, 8-1 (1), who seems to have lost some of the speed and re-

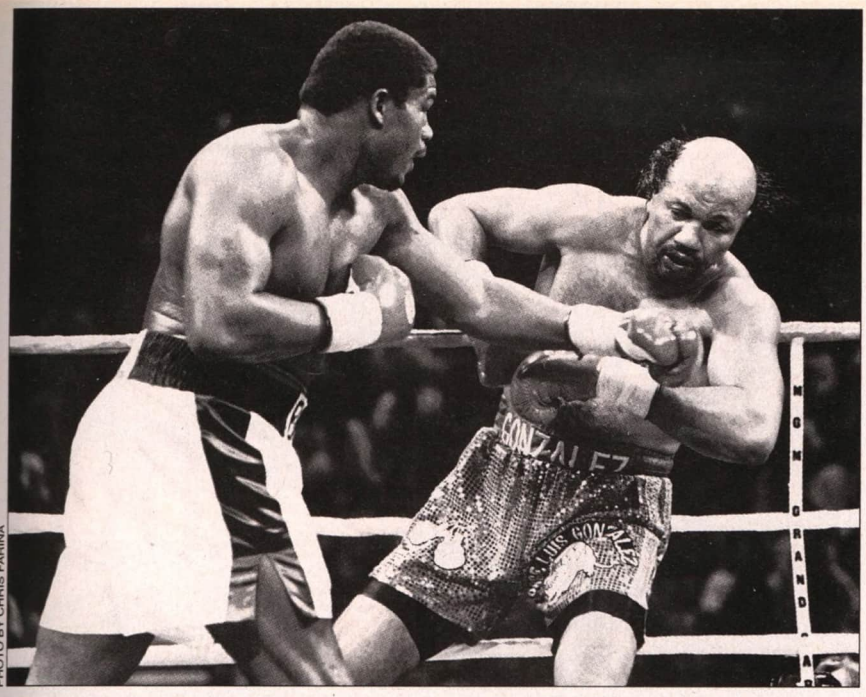


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

The biggest bust among the Cuban fighters who came to the United States to seek fame and fortune was heavyweight Jorge Luis Gonzalez, who was undefeated going into his June 1995 bout with Riddick Bowe. After Bowe knocked him out in the sixth round, Gonzalez lost seven of his next 15 bouts and retired in 2002.

flexes that earned him the gold five years ago. Last August, the 29-year-old bantamweight dropped a six-round decision to Ernie Marquez, who entered at 6-4.

"It's not that they're shot fighters," Encinosa said. "They just came here too late, or they're worn out from 10 or 12 years of amateur fighting."

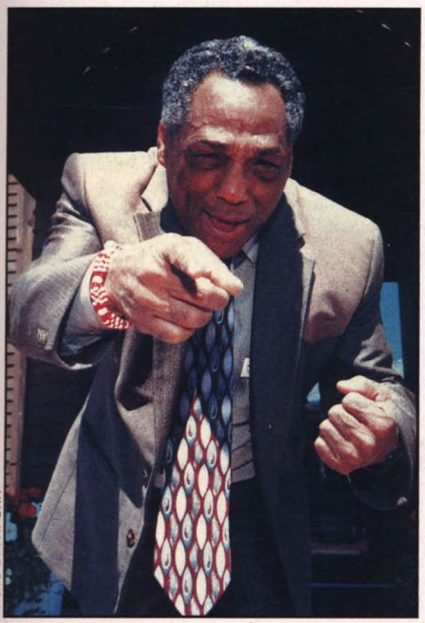


PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Setting the bar high: It is going to be very difficult for the latest band of Cuban boxers to live up to their famous predecessors, such as Sugar Ramos, pictured during his induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in June 2001.

The biggest adjustment Cuban defectors face, however, is adapting to freedom. It's not as easy as it sounds.

While in Cuba, these fighters were constantly under watch. If they strayed from the strict training regimen, they could be kicked out of the boxing program and forced into a lifelong career of manual labor. Discipline wasn't a choice.

"The difference is immeasurable," Lopez said. "In Cuba, you don't know who is looking after you, who is ready to turn you in. Here, I have all the freedoms."

Left to their own devices, fighters such as Lopez suddenly find themselves with their own money, their own car, their own apartment, and the freedom to eat whenever they want.

Meanwhile, training takes up just a few hours of each day. "So what happens the other bunch of hours?" Encinosa said. "You're eating and drinking beer. You're keeping late hours."

Back in the 1990s, Jorge Luis Gonzalez was hampered by his aversion to training, while Garbey struggled to overcome the lure of nightlife. Casamayor, meanwhile, seemed to benefit early in his career from being kept away from Miami during training camps.

Several of the more recent defectors were given signing bonuses by promoters, evidenced by the expensive cars and jewelry owned by Gamboa and Solis. But while Solis has struggled with his weight, Gamboa has been reputed to be focused and passionate about the sport.

"I think discipline is a problem," Encinosa said. "Overall, it's been a problem with the Cubans who have come over in the last 10 or 15 years."

Impossible Expectations?

Cuban amateurs have become the blood diamonds of boxing. Like the cigars from the same island, they're regarded as the best in the world, and there is no shortage of promoters willing to foot the bill to smuggle them away from Castro.

Seems like a can't-miss investment. "I'm really confident a lot of these guys will be world champions," DeCubas Sr. said. "I'm just excited to see so many Cuban fighters getting a chance to follow their dreams, like Kid Gavilan, Kid Chocolate, and Joel Casamayor, of becoming Hall of Fame fighters."

Of course, it's no sure thing that any of the recent defectors will ever reach Canastota. Successful amateurs don't always become dominant pros, no matter what country they're from.

"The bar may be too high for many of them," Martinez said.

For now, despite constantly missing and worrying for his family back in Cuba, Lopez says he's "extremely happy," with his new life. Martinez plans to move him quickly to make up for lost time.

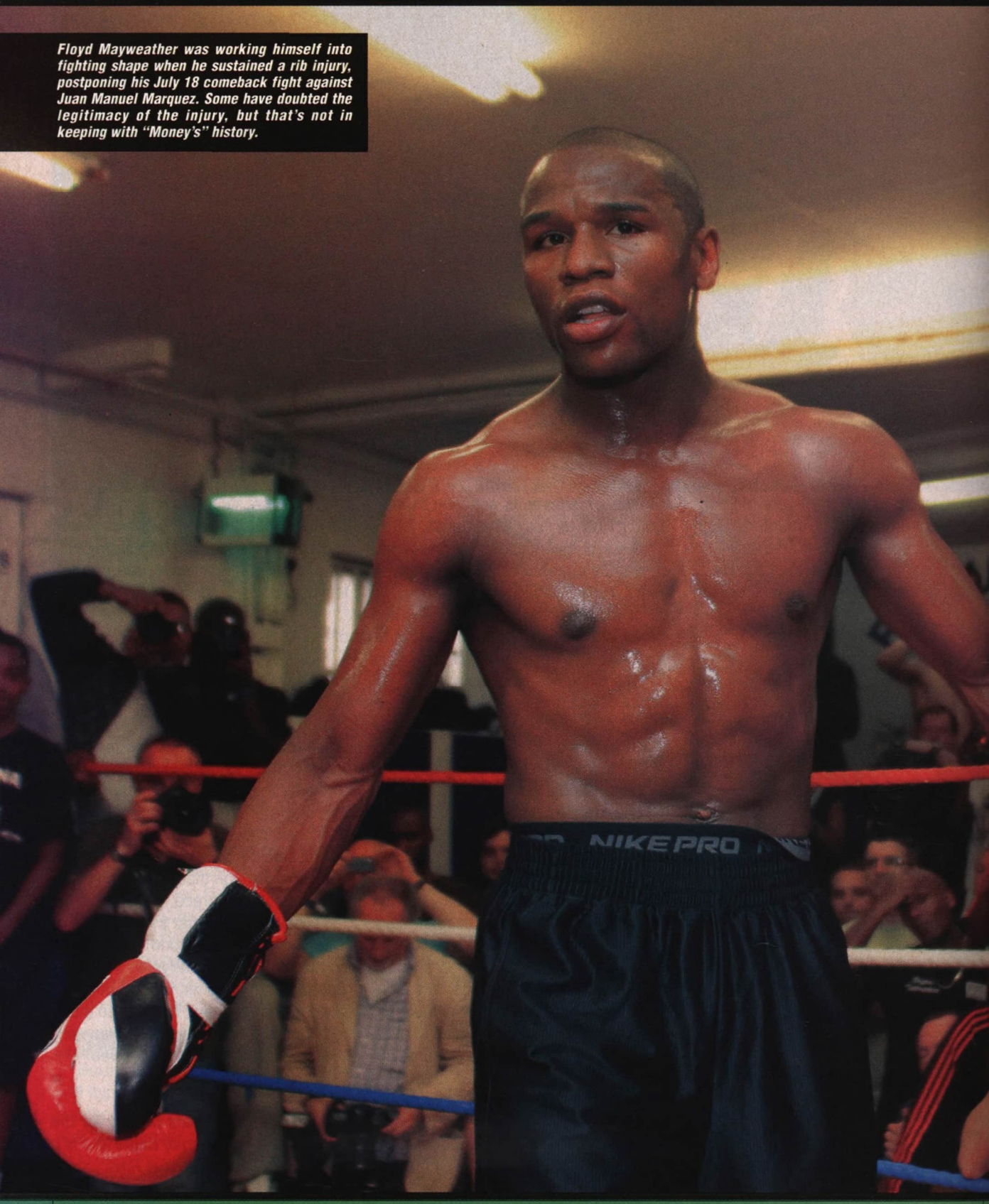
As for the lack of media attention, at this stage, Martinez is happy to keep his fighter tucked in the shadows. It's a partial shield from the pressures of expectation. Though that's a burden these guys seem to embrace.

"I really believe that there is a lot of potential to become world champions," Lopez said of his countrymen. "The real Cuban amateur boxer, which I don't really consider amateur, has had so much more training than any other nationality. We've been in the ring all our lives.

"So we have to be better." ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

It's Not Just A "Money" Issue



Floyd Mayweather was working himself into fighting shape when he sustained a rib injury, postponing his July 18 comeback fight against Juan Manuel Marquez. Some have doubted the legitimacy of the injury, but that's not in keeping with "Money's" history.

POSTPONEMENTS HAVE PLAGUED THE SPORT THROUGHOUT HISTORY

PHOTO BY CHRIS HUTTY/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

By David Mayo

Just when the heart of the 2009 calendar appeared so promising, it turned into boxing's Summer of Love—one "g" shy of something really meaningful in a sport reliant upon someone laying a glove upon someone else. From Floyd Mayweather's aborted comeback plan amid claims of a rib injury, to the curious ailments that prompted two relatively big heavyweight fights to merge into one, some of the game's biggest summer plans proved unsustainable.

Cancellations and postponements are a practical matter in any individual sport, particularly one with the injury risk inherent in boxing, where scheduling shifts have altered history in a fashion that is equal parts formless and indiscernible, yet undeniable.

Sugar Ray Robinson turned delays into a virtual art form after entering the ring for his first career loss, to Jake LaMotta, in something less than pristine shape, then vowing not to repeat that mistake. The only man to defeat Robinson twice, Gene Fullmer, suffered his first defeat since falling to Robinson more than five years earlier, losing on an unanimous decision to Dick Tiger after a series of postponements before their 1962 middleweight title bout produced a 10½-month layoff. Fullmer would end his distinguished career at age 32 with two more fights against Tiger, a draw and another loss.

What would have happened if George Foreman's eye hadn't been sliced open in a sparring session days before he was to fight Muhammad Ali? No one knows how that extra month of forced lockdown in Zaire for the rescheduled bout—and the attendant mind games that became fistic lore—affected one of the most meaningful upsets ever.

Oh, and if Evander Holyfield-Mike Tyson II had gone off as originally planned on May 3, 1997, rather than in the heat of the Las Vegas summer after Tyson suffered a bad cut in a sparring session, maybe cooler heads would have allowed Holyfield to keep his ears intact.

Regardless, there rarely has been a three-week period in recent history like the one boxing experienced from the final days of May through mid-June, when some of the biggest scheduled fights of late-spring and summer were scrapped by a litany of ailments. Some fights were restructured, or reworked with different opponents. Some were postponements, others outright cancellations.

Many inevitably stoked conspiracy theorists to question what really was afoot.

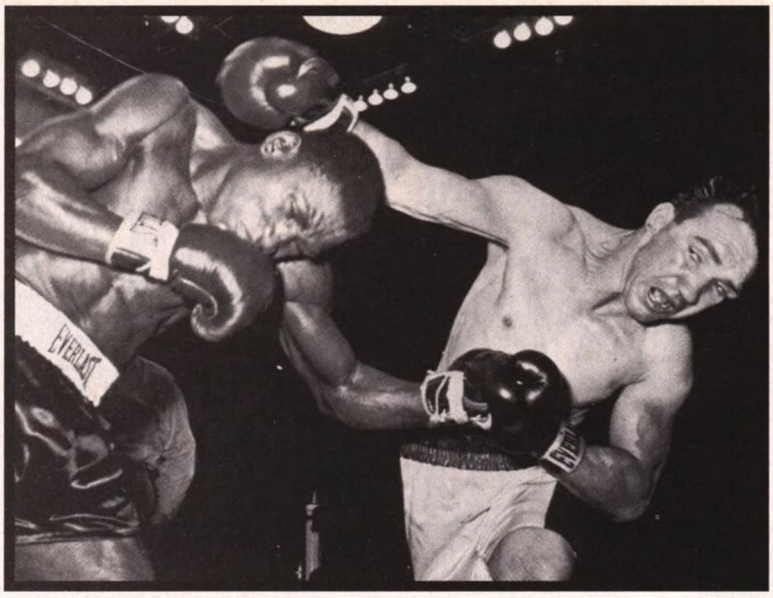
Mayweather's withdrawal from a July comeback against Juan Manuel Marquez topped all those lists. But it hardly was the only example of a significant fight that tempted fans worldwide, only to have those prospects doused within little more than a fortnight.

• Ruslan Chagaev ended up fighting Wladimir Klitschko for the heavyweight championship in June after the cancellation of two scheduled bouts, Chagaev vs. Nicolay Valuev and Klitschko vs. David Haye.

Chagaev and Haye are as highly regarded as any heavyweight not named Klitschko, although the upshot on this murky mess was that the unbeaten Chagaev's health, not

Valuev's, was responsible for their canceled rematch. Chagaev was unable to pass a physical examination in Finland, for reasons not officially disclosed because of Finnish law but widely reported to be mild hepatitis. That cancellation followed two previous postponements of Chagaev-Valuev II when Chagaev had an injured Achilles' tendon.

Yet within three weeks, Chagaev apparently was able to pass a similar physical exam in Germany to fight Klitschko, thereby becoming the beneficiary of his own officially unspecified ailment.



A series of postponements kept Gene Fullmer out of action for nearly 11 months before fighting Dick Tiger in 1962. Fullmer could blame inactivity for his first loss to Tiger, but two more fights resulted in a draw and another loss.

It took almost two years for Chagaev to get a big fight after he withdrew from a 2007 bout against Sultan Ibragimov with illness and was replaced by Evander Holyfield. And unless you counted the prospect of his aborted Valuev rematch as particularly compelling, Chagaev needed a back injury to the once-beaten Haye—who could face a similarly lengthy freeze-out once he heals—to get there.

• Once-beaten Amir Khan, fresh off a victory over Marco Antonio Barrera, had his first shot at a title belt delayed when Andreas Kotelnik, the WBA's 140-pound king, pulled out of their scheduled July bout with a tooth infection.

• Finally, the scheduling snafus extended as far south as bantamweight when Eric Morel saw Fernando Montiel withdraw from their anticipated July bout with a hand injury. Jorge Arce quickly was named to fight Morel instead, amid plans to reschedule Montiel-Morel for September.

The rib cartilage injury cited for Mayweather's withdrawal from the Marquez fight overshadowed all other cancellations and postponements combined. Such an injury can prove debilitating to people in far less strenuous activities than boxing, and someone who overexerts is particularly susceptible to it—like, say, a fighter making a comeback.

That didn't stop all sorts of doubts about the veracity of Mayweather's claim, considering that early ticket sales were reportedly not going as well as had been hoped.

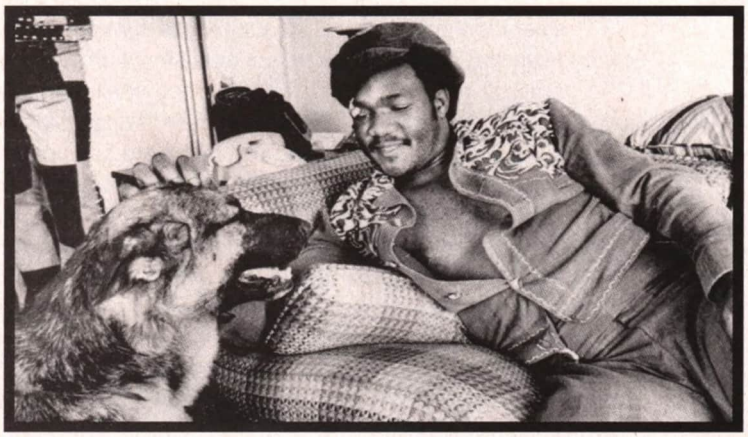
However, it bears notice that Mayweather historically is not given to withdrawing from a fight for any reason, and certainly not to help save someone else's pocketbook. When he faced Carlos Baldomir for a purse of $8,000,001 (notable to him because it was $1 more than he was offered to face Antonio Margarito instead), the fight proceeded despite tepid support from the buying audience at Mandalay Bay, and drew its back-end financial payoff with a respectable pay-per-view revenue of about $17-million. It is a safe bet that Mayweather-Marquez, regardless what the live gate might have been, would have generated far more substantial profits from home sales.

In 2001, Mayweather entered the ring against Carlos Hernandez with two damaged hands and broke down in mid-fight. Later that year, he withdrew from a bout for the only other time in his career, after he had his wisdom teeth extracted and had to suspend training, prompting Jesus Chavez to question whether their fight would be rescheduled. Five weeks later than originally planned—and in San Francisco, rather than Las Vegas—Mayweather stopped Chavez after nine rounds.

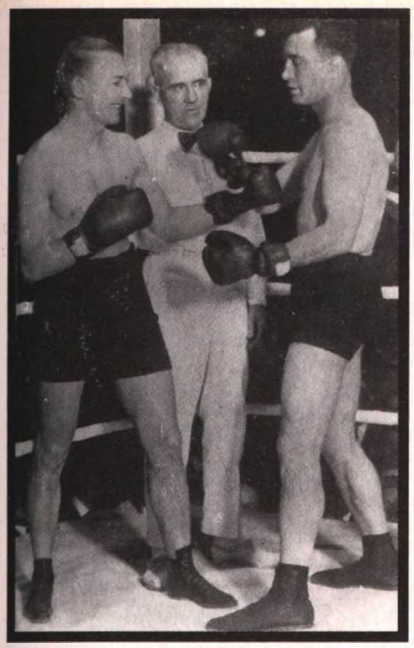
Again, it is possible many of the summer scheduling snafus have been resolved by the time you read this magazine. Mayweather-Marquez may be restored, Pacquiao may have signed to fight Miguel Cotto, Klitschko and Haye might reach some future agreement, Montiel-Morel and Kotelnik-Khan may be rescheduled, and all may be well in the fistic universe.

That does not mean we ever know the precise impact of cancellations and postponements, a fact born out by the questions they have left on many memorable fights throughout history.

In 1920, three postponements between welterweight champion Jack Britton and lightweight champion Benny Leonard delayed that fight more than two years. When it finally occurred, it produced one of the most controversial big-fight endings in history, with



After a slit eye delayed George Foreman's heavyweight title defense against Muhammad Ali in Zaire, the champion told of a dream that he beat The Greatest "with one hand and one eye." The reality of the actual fight was Foreman's worst nightmare.



Two years of postponements delayed the hotly anticipated Benny Leonard-Jack Britton showdown in 1920. When they finally met, the fight ended in bizarre fashion with Leonard coming from behind to knock down Britton in the 13th, and then getting disqualified for hitting Britton while he was on one knee.

Britton dominating the first 12 rounds until a bodyshot dropped him in the 13th. When Britton got up to one knee, Leonard—perhaps overanxious after the long wait and suddenly emboldened by his big moment—raced in too early, landed a glancing punch, and was disqualified.

Cinematic history was altered by a boxing postponement. In 1934, no-hoper James J. Braddock was selected as last-minute replacement to fight John "Corn" Griffin on the undercard of the Max Baer-Primo Carnera heavyweight title fight. Braddock's stunning third-round knockout victory steered him into a couple more big wins before he shocked Baer to become champion the following year. Seven decades later, *Cinderella Man* was a major Hollywood blockbuster.

Heavyweights seem to have more than their share of meaningful cancellations and postponements. Holyfield-Tyson I, like the sequel, was delayed by a Tyson injury, to his ribs. Larry Holmes-Gerry Cooney was delayed three months when Cooney injured a shoulder.

Ali was at the center of some of the most meaningful delays. A decade before his "Rumble In The Jungle" with Foreman, the rematch of his upset of Sonny Liston, originally scheduled for late-1964, was delayed six months after he underwent emergency hernia surgery three days before the fight was to occur. The 10-year age gap and emotional distress had a far greater impact on Liston when the rescheduled fight was moved from Boston to tiny Lewiston, Maine—along with the conspiracy theories that contend he was ordered to take a dive to satisfy mob interests—all of which may have contributed to the Ali "anchor punch" that produced a curious, some say spurious, knockout barely two minutes into the fight.

But cancellations and postponements hardly are limited to heavyweights as a division, nor to injuries as a cause.

Weight scrapped Jose Luis Castillo-Diego Corrales III, which never happened because Castillo again showed up at the scales desperately overweight, just as he had before winning the rematch of their epic 2005 original.

Terrorism postponed Bernard Hopkins-Felix Trinidad after the 2001 attacks prompted a two-week delay of their bout at Madison Square Garden. Hopkins went home to Philadelphia and resumed training, while Trinidad remained in New York amid the horror and grieving. The fight eerily reflected those experiences, with Trinidad lethargic, and Hopkins systematically breaking him down before the 12th-round *coup de grace*.

Torrential rains may have altered welterweight title history as far back as 1934, when Barney Ross' defense in Chicago against Jimmy McLarnin—from whom he had won the title on a split decision that same year—was postponed three consecutive days, with the fighters forced to make weight each morning. After the third postponement, Ross withdrew to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, while McLarnin continued training. The fight finally happened in New York, 11 days after the original date, but only after yet another rain-induced postponement and weigh-in there. On the fifth planned day for the fight, McLarnin won a split decision. More than eight months would pass before Ross regained the title in a rubber match, which also happened to be the 12th consecutive welterweight title bout in which the champion lost the title in his first defense.

Cancellation insurance used to be commonplace before premiums exploded after a mid-1990s lawsuit by Lloyd's of London, which claimed Don King defrauded it by inflating a $350,000 claim for training expenses paid to Julio Cesar Chavez for a cancelled 1991 fight against Harold Brazier. Two trials resulted in a hung jury, then an acquittal.

Even in the days when cancellation insurance was prevalent, there was no insurance against the impact a cancellation or postponement could have on boxing history.

Then again, there never has been. ■

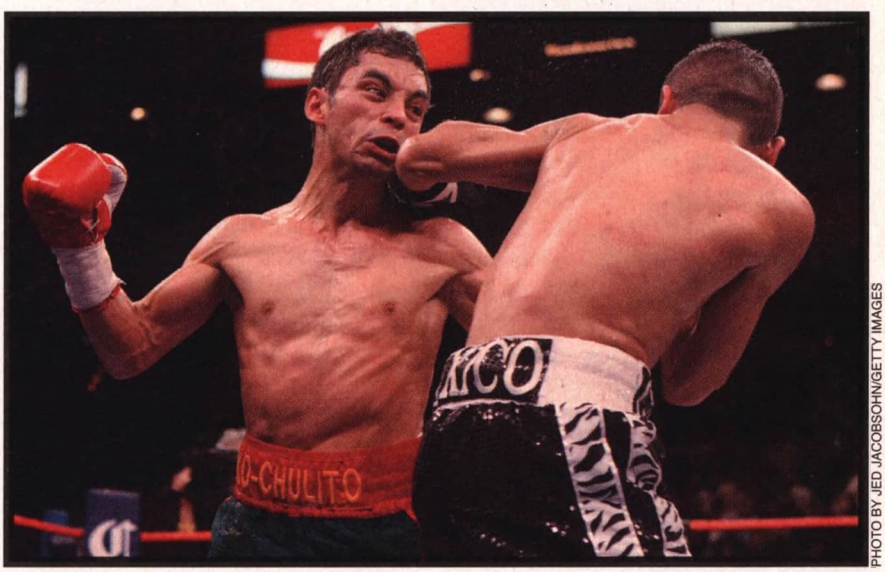


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

A hand injury to bantamweight Fernando Montiel forced him out of this fight with Eric Morel, who quickly rescheduled to fight Jorge Arce.

Lennox Lewis

"It's Nice To Be Finally Appreciated"

It's one of those is-that-who-I-think-it-is moments: A large, rather recognizable man surrounded by a bunch of screaming, jumping children that come up to his waist as he's throwing out soccer balls and telling them to do wind sprints.

It's how former heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, now 43, fills parts of his days now, spending time with his son at soccer practice, along with going to school events, feeding his baby daughter, and basically adjusting to life after a Hall of Fame boxing career.

After years of being underappreciated by boxing fans, Lewis finds himself even more admired today than when he was knocking out Mike Tyson and Hasim Rahman, and slicing up Vitali Klitschko. Lewis hasn't fought since June 2003, but some people still believe that he's the heavyweight champion of the world.

It's rather easy to see why. No one has defined the heavyweight division since Lewis, 41-2-1 (32), retired from boxing six years ago. He spends time traveling between homes in Jamaica, Miami, Florida, and Canada. And he's still very much involved with boxing, first and foremost as a commentator on HBO's ***Boxing After Dark*** *telecasts.*

Two weeks before the ex-champ's induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, THE RING *Managing Editor Joseph Santoliquito spoke with Lewis, who commented candidly about the woeful state of the heavyweight division, revealed some interesting quirks about his most memorable fights, and where he sees himself in the future.*

Santoliquito reports: "Lennox is a pretty amazing man. What I sensed most about him at this stage of his life is contentment. He's really happy with his station right now, comfortable in his own skin. He's very guarded about his private life. For example, he asked that the names of his children not be used in the interview, which I honored. He's more comfortable showing his real persona in public. He's intelligent, very engaging, and a great ambassador for the sport of boxing."

The Ring: How different is your life after retiring?

Lennox Lewis: My life is a bit calmer than it used to be. I'm less involved in the sport and I have more personal time. But I don't have anyone trying to knock me out and throwing punches at me to make a living *(laughs)*. It's changed in the sense it's a little less hectic, with training camp and people all around all of the time.

The Ring: How do you fill your days?

LL: I'm pretty busy each day. My family comes first. When I get up, the phone starts ringing, whether it's interviews or different business things I may be working on. I thought retirement would be easy. It isn't. I'm still busy. The important thing is that I control it, but there is always something to do out there. I could sleep in every day. My son gets me up around 7:30 in the morning. I get him ready for school and we all have breakfast together, my son and daughter, and obviously my wife as well. Then my day depends on what I have to do, whether it's things on my house or upcoming businesses. For a fight weekend, I just have to do a little reading for HBO and later go to fight meetings, and do a couple of interviews for the fight. It's great because I always wanted to be my own boss.

The Ring: What's it like being a father?

LL: Nothing brings me more joy than fatherhood. I have a son and daughter who have unique personalities, and their love is without fault. It's a joy each day just to see what happens. My son is me, basically. He's big for his age; he looks like me. I have to tell you this one *(laughs)*: My son sees the bite mark on my leg from Mike Tyson. He asks me why Mike Tyson bit me. I told him it's what happens when naughty people do bad things. He says he wants to beat up Mike Tyson and where is Mike Tyson. My son wants to fight my battles for me *(laughs)*.

I have to say I'm very, very sorry to hear what happened to Tyson's family. No one ever wants to experience something he's going through, the death of a child. He's in my prayers. But it makes me appreciate my chil-

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Lewis smashes Mike Tyson in what Lennox calls the most important victory of his career. Beating Tyson cemented his place on the pantheon of heavyweight greats, but Lewis also had some personal payback, wanting to punish "Iron Mike" for the bite Lewis says he received during their prefight press conference melee in New York.

dren even more. I thought about my children and went right to my treadmill to make sure there were no cords around. I really don't know what I would do if something ever happened to my kids.

The Ring: Most fighters don't want their children to fight. Would you discourage your son from doing what his daddy did?

LL: My son is at that kid-joy stage where they don't have a care in the world. I hope he stays a kid for a very long time. He knows who his daddy is. He knows daddy is the champion. The first time I took my son out, this guy put his hands up like he wanted to box him, and my son hid behind me *(laughs)*. But everything he knows about boxing, someone else has taught him. My daughter has a better style than my son, and she's only three *(laughs)*. I wouldn't hope they would have to box, but if they wanted to, I wouldn't stop them. To me, boxing is another sport and that's the way I see it. If my son or daughter wanted to fight, I wouldn't get in their way.

The Ring: What do you miss most about fighting?

LL: The excitement of the crowd before and during a big fight. I miss that. I miss the buildup. Boxing is never boring. Boxing is a sport where it's exciting in the sense of having someone trying to beat you, trying to win over you, and you have to make sure you keep your head above water. I always loved the excitement and the thrill of action and competition. I have a deep competitive instinct that is always there, whether it's boxing or playing pool. There are some of us that are driven and I'm always driven to do something.

The Ring: When did the moment come that you thought about retiring? Was it when the referee raised your arm after beating Vitali Klitschko?

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Lewis wasn't too crazy about fighting Vitali Klitschko, but felt forced into it. Today, he says it's a fight he loves to watch, calling it his "icing" on a Hall of Fame career. It pitted two heavyweights of similar size in a thrilling punchout in which Lewis rallied to stop Klitschko on cuts.

LL: Not really. I didn't really know I'd retire then. I like to say the Klitschko fight was the icing on the Lennox Lewis career. There was the argument that Klitschko was knocking at the door of my championship, and all these sports bodies were threatening to take my belts. I was supposed to fight Kirk Johnson, and the plan was to have the Klitschko fight at the end of the year. Klitschko was ready for me before the fight.

The Ring: Did you get a sense you were being pushed out the door?

LL: I got talked into the Klitschko fight. I had no hunger for Klitschko. It wasn't like he said he was going to eat my children.

There was nothing mean or personal he said. I looked at him as a nice guy, but an inexperienced guy trying to get a fight. HBO talked me into it and they told me it would be an easy fight. It was different people at HBO saying it would be easy for me, and that I would knock him out. I knew the machine was turning at the time. They were looking for the next champion. Klitschko was the one. Those plans were halted by five separate cuts around someone's eye. I may have lost the first three rounds of that fight, but I was taking buddy into the deep end. What I realized about my preparation was that I was training for someone else. That wasn't me the first portion of that fight. It kind of reminded me of the Frank Bruno fight. Then all of a sudden the tide started to turn. I didn't train for five rounds, I trained for 12, 13 rounds. But for Klitschko, even at my worst, I still beat him. Believe me, that was at my worst, and he was going to get knocked out. *At my worst!* But I didn't really know that would be my last fight before the fight, or even right after.

The Ring: So when did you make the decision to retire?

LL: It was actually after the Klitschko fight, maybe about a month after watching it. It was weird, because I look at that fight in a different way. I loved it because it was a chance to fight someone as big as me. This was actually a back-and-forth fight where you can show who's the man. Where you can separate the men from the boys. For me, I loved that fight because people would say it was a good fight. I'd say, "Yea, you think?" When you look at it, it was a good fight because I got hit. You can show your heart. I wasn't boxing for points. I was boxing to finish this man. It's the first time you see me slug it out. No one was used to seeing me like that.

That proved Klitschko could never beat me. It didn't matter. It took me 10 days to prepare for him. That was it—and after a long layoff. That was the time to catch Lennox Lewis slacking, and that didn't work. The only one who could beat Lennox Lewis is Lennox Lewis. If I'm prepared, it's difficult to beat me. When I prepare, I prepare for you. That means I'm dissecting you. If you're a fighter who boxes inside, I won't let you do that. It was like I didn't have to prove anything else after I beat Klitschko. My goal was to get all the misfits out of boxing. Getting rid of Tyson was my last fight. Getting rid of Klitschko was a treat to the fans. That was my going-away present. I didn't think I needed to do any more.

It's important how you leave your legacy. There are some heavyweights who should have retired before they did. They go to the point where the referee taps them on the shoulder and says, "That's enough, son, that's enough." When you reach that point, you can't do anything. The man you're up against is too fast and he's hitting you. I would hate to reach that point. I control my career. I'm the one who retires and I'm the one who says that's it. My team is not saying that, it's me. I'm the one who is putting his life on the line and leader of my own destiny.

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

"There wasn't any one time I thought about coming back. But I did think about coming out of retirement a couple of times. Always being around boxing makes you think about coming back. But every time I think I should, I think about why I shouldn't. It's a constant struggle and why I shouldn't fight always wins."

The Ring: What's the closest you came to coming out of retirement?

LL: There wasn't any one time I thought about coming back. But I did think about coming out of retirement a couple of times. Always being around boxing makes you think about coming back. But every time I think I should, I think about why I shouldn't. It's a constant struggle, and why I shouldn't fight always wins. I understand history, and history is my key to the future. Mentally, I'm the best. But physically, I understand Father Time. When I was 19, I'd get up at five in the morning and run all day. You have to be able to judge and

understand your capabilities, and to be at that top level you have to start accepting that things are going down. Still, the warrior in you is always there. It wants to fight. You see these fights sitting at ringside and it brings back memories, especially when you're still involved in it like I am. You can say the itch comes when I'm commenting and there are certain fighters that I see, and I say to myself, *Boy, these guys are getting a break. They're fighting guys who want to get their light bill paid.* These type of opponents need to be taken out as quickly as possibly, and they're being allowed to stay around. It bothers me that some guys aren't putting themselves out there more. It makes the boxing fan not interested in the sport anymore. You don't get paid for overtime. You get paid to knock people out. What people want to see isn't happening and they're disappointed and unfulfilled. That's the sort of thing that makes me want to fight again.

The Ring: What do you miss about living the life of the heavyweight champion of the world?

LL: I'm still living it, in my opinion. But I miss the thrill and feeling that excitement that people feel. There were people who had a connection with me every time I fought. It's like every time Manny Pacquiao fights, the whole Philippines feels every punch he takes and can celebrate every time he knocks someone out. You see Pacquiao and how they adore him and you can remember the type of feeling that he's getting. You had that at one time. Not that you miss it, it's that you remember it. It's always a part of your memories.

The Ring: Speaking of memories, aside from not being in shape for the first Hasim Rahman fight, what was the biggest regret of your career?

LL: I have to get this out first: For the first Rahman fight I wasn't myself and I wasn't prepared the way I should have, but that prepared me for the next stage of my life. Maybe I don't have any one big regret because I always try to keep as positive as possible. The losses happened for a reason. I thought I was unstoppable going into the Oliver McCall fight, and everyone saw what happened there. I was stoppable, and that taught me to fix the chink in my armor. Then I became the best in the sport.

The Ring: Was working with Panos Eliades early in your career a big mistake? *(Editor's note: In 2004, Lewis was awarded approximately $8-million in damages when a federal jury found Lewis had been swindled by his promoter.)*

LL: That was one of my regrets. Everyone goes through bad management and you hear about situations where management or promoters take advantage of a boxer. In my opinion, he took advantage of me while he was supposed to be looking out for my best interest. He was actually looking out for himself. I started to get the signs. When someone speaks and you're confused, there is a problem. Someone was speaking to me, and I wasn't getting it. Panos meant to keep me confused. I had different whispers from people to watch out for this guy. I brought in one of my old friends and they told me how I should approach the situation. I got some good accountants on the job and they told me what was happening. At that time, I lost a big amount over a few fights. It was easily over a million dollars. But I got out of that and it was a situation I went through for five years. You live and you learn, and I learned.

When I first went into boxing, I realized you get abused and used. I wanted to keep it to a minimum. It's why I started managing and promoting myself. Sometimes I had managers there and they weren't doing any work. They told me I had to pay them at that time to get rated. It's what some of the managers said to me. I didn't know where the money went, whether it was the manager or to somebody else.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Lewis felt there were a lot of strange things going on when he had his first fight with Evander Holyfield. In the minds of the vast majority of observers Lewis was the hands-down winner. But dubious judging resulted in a scandalous draw. Lewis won a unanimous decision in a November 1999 rematch.

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

"For my legacy, beating Tyson was the biggest thing. His fans never believed that he lost. There was always some excuse that he wasn't ready or in shape, or he was in jail. People still wanted to see Tyson fight and that he still has skills. They might be mentally deranged, but they still wanted to see him fight. For me that fight was about unfinished business."

The Ring: Do you regret not having Emanuel Steward as your trainer sooner in your career?

LL: There is no doubt about that. Everything happens for a reason. Manny is a trainer of champions. Those boxers who are not successful with Manny should look at themselves, because this man can break it down real quick. Manny sharpened up the things that needed to be fixed. They may have been little things, but he was able to help fix those things. In the Ray Mercer fight, I was getting hit with Mercer's jab and I'm thinking, *Why am I getting a fat lip?* Manny told me because my right hand was on the side of my face, not in front of my face. It's those things that make a difference. It's funny now, because in the gym the other day I saw this up-and-coming boxer and I was telling him the same things Manny used to tell me. Now that I've gone through it, I understand what Manny did for me at that time. You have to ask yourself, does the trainer make the fighter or the fighter make the trainer? I think it's both. The trainer makes the fighter and fighter makes the trainer. A fighter is taught how to use his talent; he grows into that talent. As for a trainer, he has the knowledge and ability to communicate that to a young fighter.

The Ring: Fans may not have gotten much from you in the past as to who the real Lennox is until you appeared on *Celebrity Apprentice*.

Do you think shyness transferred into you being characterized as aloof and prevented the real you from coming across?

LL: That's a good question. That was a bad knock. I understand where it comes from. It comes from some people saying I'm arrogant. Even my wife says Americans give me a bad knock by saying that I was arrogant. The aloofness comes from Mike Tyson, because my life wasn't going to be an open book like his. My life isn't a train wreck. You're not going to get a train wreck with me. I do something positive, but you hear nothing about it. Mike Tyson does something negative, he's all over the paper. It's not the public's fault; it's what they're being fed. People wanted to know about me. But what woman I'm dating at the time, what nightclub I was going to, that's no one's business. I'm having a date and next thing I know it's all over the place. I don't like my life in the front like that. It's an unfair assessment that I got. Most people didn't see my personality before *The Apprentice*. Now they're getting to know me. I get more appreciation that way. People today are getting to know Lennox the man. I try to get HBO to put me on other shows. They're my promoters, in a sense, but they didn't want to promote me during my career. It did a lot more to allow me to become closer to my American fans now than I did during my career. But there are different things HBO could have done to highlight me. It's too bad *24/7* didn't come around until after my career.

The Ring: Do you feel you're more appreciated now than you did during your boxing career?

LL: Yes, I do. It's nice to be finally appreciated. Throughout my career I was more the quiet type of boxer who let my fists do all of the talking. Boxing is a sport where you're not given the glory straight away. You prove yourself. It's a slow appreciation in that sense. It's like a fine wine. Appreciation builds with time. For avid fans out there, they appreciated me. Great men in every aspect of life are always persecuted at first. I always like to say my career was like a long road, where there were side roads and curves, but I got to the top of the hill. There were fights when the referees and judges were against me, and it was hard. I had to overcome that.

After he retired, Lewis admitted that he thought about coming back a few times. But each time his mind wanted to, his body told him something different. "When I was 19, I'd get up at five in the morning and run all day ... you have to start accepting that things are going down," he said.

The Ring: Now you are a Hall of Famer. Were you surprised by being a first-ballot inductee? Or did you take it for granted you'd be elected?

LL: I did take it for granted after being a champion for such a long time. A couple of my friends would make a joke that I'm not retired and I'm coming back. That makes you feel like you're not really retired. Funny thing, my speech at the Hall of Fame in my fantasy dreams is that the world is watching and I tell them that I'm coming back *(laughs)*. HBO tells me they have this design to make me a star after I say that I'm coming back *(laughs)*. But really, I never thought of the Hall of Fame, and the fact that I was elected on the first ballot is a real honor.

It is a great accomplishment. I haven't really taken it in and woke up to it. I'm glad to be considered one of the greats. It gives me a feeling of satisfaction to be seen in that light. It makes me know that something great has occurred from all the sacrifice and downfalls. I don't need to say I should have and could have done this. Now I'm looked at as one of the elite in history. Anyone can see what I've done and what my career was like.

The Ring: Do you think of yourself as an all-time great?

LL: I do. I think I'm in the top five in heavyweight history. I set a legacy, in my opinion, for young boxers to follow. Seven or eight years ago if you asked me that question, I wouldn't have thought so. Now I can look back at my fights and there is a story there. I was leader of the pack in my era. I didn't cross eras. I fought the best of my era and I beat them all. I have that connection with the past. The era I fought was my era, like Jack Johnson's and Muhammad Ali's.

The Ring: What do you think of the current heavyweight scene?

LL: I think it's terrible *(laughs)*. There is no Lennox Lewis around—no Mike Tysons or Evander Holyfields. Well, not Evander in his prime *(laughs)*. There is a gap where everyone is missing a heavyweight champion and I am that gap. These heavyweights today aren't

doing what the old heavyweights used to do, throw a lot of punches. They're not giving due diligence to the sport in training properly. I showed what heavyweights today need to do, and that's go to camp and train hard. They're not doing it.

I think there is some potential, but my question is what do you have after Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko? Do you think Chris Arreola is a good fight for Wladimir Klitschko? How? You can't fool me. There's no real matchup there, though you'll have people trying to sell it. You have guys coming up, like David Haye, who is a nice guy and a great boxer, but when he goes up against the best he's at a big disadvantage of giving up 50 pounds. You know what will happen when someone like a Haye fights either of the Klitschkos. That's a recipe for disaster.

The Ring: Do you think the fact that you cleaned out the division before retiring is part of the reason the heavyweight division to so barren at this time?

LL: There's no question about it. The lull in the division right now comes from what I did. The Klitschko brothers are great fighters, but they both want to be champions in the same weight division at the same time. They've watered it down, because it's not one champion. People want to see the best get together. I understand their mother doesn't want to see them fight, but this isn't tennis. They knew that when they got into boxing. I would like to see the brothers fight. You heard that right. They should fight. In real life brothers fight all the time. If I had two sons, I wouldn't want them to fight each other, but any way you look at it, brothers get into it. Brothers fight. Why not get paid for it?

The Ring: Let's talk more about your career. Everyone thought you won the first fight with Evander Holyfield in March 1993. Did you think something was fishy?

LL: I thought there were a lot of things that weren't right about that fight when it comes to a crooked decision like that. I think it was fixed. I was so sure I won that I was celebrating before the fight was over. The British fans showed up for me. They showed up in droves, and American fans were even saying that they robbed me. The biggest thing about that fight is that the whole world saw who the best heavyweight in the world was that night. I faced Holyfield and I beat him. HBO made this thing that Holyfield was the greatest heavyweight out there. I didn't respect that. They tried to make their own history. Holyfield at the time hadn't fought me yet.

I was a true heavyweight. I'm 6'5" and I have the talent, like Muhammad Ali. I'm the next era of heavyweight championship boxing. I proved that by showing them I beat Holyfield. That was the biggest thing for me.

There was no doubt in my mind that there was something going on. They had some dodgy people working for the New York commission and I thought that was kind of weird. When I went to take my physical in the New York offices, I found the whole situation kind of weird, moving me from office to office and they never explained to me why. I was there just to take a physical. You hear why one judge gave the fight to Holyfield, saying the referee was in the way. That's preposterous.

There were a lot of strange things going on and it bothered me. You're fighting the promoter and fighting the judges. Even before the first Holyfield fight, I always wanted a 20-foot ring. But in the Ray Mercer fight (held in New York on 1996), they cut that ring down because they knew my footwork was a big thing. No one comes out and says the odds are stacked against you, but they are. But I came out with flying colors.

The Ring: Did you feel you needed

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

"I think [the heavyweight division] is terrible. I think there is some potential, but my question is what do you have after Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko? What? Do you think Chris Arreola is a good fight for Wladimir Klitschko? How? You can't fool me."

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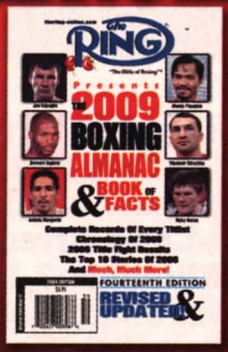

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to beat Tyson to legitimize yourself in the eyes of the mainstream sports fan? People still thought Tyson was going to knock you out, didn't they?

LL: Every time I went to get a haircut, I heard "Tyson would have beaten you." I wanted to end that argument. People still think Tyson is good *(laughs)*. For my legacy, beating Tyson was the biggest thing. His fans never believed that he lost. There was always some excuse that he wasn't ready or in shape, or he was in jail. People still wanted to see Tyson fight and that he still has skills. They might be mentally deranged, but they still wanted to see him fight *(laughs)*. For me that fight was about unfinished business. It was basically the talk of the era and that needed to be satisfied not only for me, but also for the rest of the boxing nation. I had to knock him out. Well, I wanted to knock him out. What really helped me prepare for Tyson was the fact that he bit me *(laughs)*.

The Ring: What was that like?

LL: I don't know how to describe being bit by a man *(laughs)*. When you feel pain coming from your leg, you push against the pain and there you see a grown man grinning up at you with a piece of your leg in his mouth *(laughs)*. We're gladiators, not little children who bite.

The Ring: Did the fight go as planned?

LL: I had no doubts I would beat him. My preparation was easy. After he bit me, I wanted to get him. We didn't have to fight outside the ring. I was getting him and getting paid for it. There was no doubt that I would beat him. Manny thought they were going to take the fight away from me, because I'd been screwed over so many times. He wanted me to knock him out. But Manny wasn't aware that I had hurt my right hand. I had to deal with it and mentally step above. I was not caught up in the drama of Mike Tyson. He had this façade that he was bad. He didn't scare me. He angered me. I wanted to punish him. I definitely could have finished him sooner than I did. In the third or fourth round, my jab alone was hurting him.

Tyson is a tough man and he does have heart, because for the first time my left hand was swelled each time I hit him. It was like he hit a wall. I have to rate him on heart. He has a lot of that. After that fight, I fulfilled what I wanted to do. I got rid of all the misfits and completed a goal.

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

The Tyson victory was the most satisfactory for Lewis, but a close second was Lewis' victory over Rahman in their rematch. Rahman was acting so chaotic before the fight that, according to Lewis, he tried bulling his way into Lewis' dressing room before the fight to watch Lennox get his hands wrapped.

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

"I'm not caught up in the drama of Mike Tyson. He had this façade that he was bad. He didn't scare me. He angered me. I wanted to punish him. I definitely could have finished him sooner than I did. In the third or fourth round, my jab alone was hurting him."

The Ring: Was beating Tyson your most satisfying victory?

LL: The Tyson fight was, but the second Rahman fight is up there. I had such a great Christmas after beating Rahman. He reignited a flame in me that was dwindling. Every fighter goes through pivotal fights where they train seriously and sacrifice a lot. Rahman tried to come into my dressing room before the second fight. I dreamt about what was going to happen to him and I kept remembering that I was going to knock him out. The first fight and the second were like night and day. Rahman didn't hit me in the second fight at all. If you tell me where he hit me in that second fight, I'd give you a million dollars.

Rahman was a mess. I'll tell you how much of a mess he was. I had the Fruits of Islam, a security team, in front of my locker room door. At the time, I gave them orders that just the referee was allowed in. I was getting the normal prefight instruction. The referee told me one person from Rahman's dressing room was going to come over and watch me wrap. It was Rahman *(laughs)*! The Fruits of Islam stopped Rahman at the door. I'm hearing this commotion outside my door and I asked who it was. They told me Rahman was trying to get in to see my hands get wrapped *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Gavin Evans' book, *Mamma's Boy*, gave a lot of insight about you. What did you think about the book?

LL: That was a good book. It's always great when someone writes their perspective on you, and it was great that someone did a book on me. It gave people a greater understanding of who

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I am. The book was tastefully done. Gavin spent a lot of time with me and got to know the real me. It told that I didn't have an easy life. People forget that I didn't have it easy. The book brought out my history and told people who I am. The history people wanted to find out from the beginning. I just wanted to keep it to a limit what was printed.

The Ring: You've received some criticism for your work with HBO. Do you think it's fair?

LL: I'm getting used to the role. I've found commenting is like skateboarding, because you're surfing all of the time, like in the ring. It's obviously not easy. People went to school for broadcasting, and all of a sudden I'm placed into a role. At first, I'll admit, it was a difficult adjustment. I wasn't comfortable because I never did it before. I wasn't sure where I was supposed to be. I think I've grown into the role. I understand what I'm supposed to be doing and I understand my worth. I talk about things I used to experience in the ring.

As far as opinions, everyone has an opinion and they want to know my opinion. That's slowly coming out. At first, I admit, it wasn't. I'm not out there to slam boxers. It's what I used to hate when I fought—commentators slamming fighters, calling them bums and this and that. I understand what fighters had to do to get to this level. It's like a fighter's code. It's why I hate when other fighters talk trash about other fighters. I'm thinking, *Dude, you know what these guys have been through because you've been through the same thing.* How stupid! You have to show some tact. Overall, I do think I'm getting better as a broadcaster, and that comes from hard work, and I feel a lot more comfortable.

The Ring: What do you think about a little guy like Manny Pacquiao being the biggest draw in boxing today?

LL: I think it's great, and I think Pacquiao is a great ambassador for the sport. He's the pound-for-pound best in the world. But the little guy can never take over the sport. You put a good little guy in the there and a good big guy in there, and people want to see the big guys. It's nothing against Pacquiao. I think he's great. But when the big guys fall, it's like a big thump. Pacquiao's great shot in his last fight helps the sport, but the heavyweights rule. What rules boxing is the money, and the money will always be with the heavyweights—the good ones *(laughs)*.

"You put a good little guy in the there and a good big guy in there, people want to see the big guys. It's nothing against [Manny] Pacquiao. I think he's great. But the heavyweights rule. What rules boxing is the money, and the money will always be with the heavyweights—the good ones."

The Ring: What is left out there for you to achieve?

LL: I'm setting new goals. Right now, the future is my children and anything I can do to help my family. I'm setting up a couple of gyms in different places out of devotion to my first trainer, Arnie Boem. When I was a kid, he used to drive me all over the place for fights. He put a lot of his life into helping kids. He bought me my first headgear and jock. He used to travel to fights with 10 kids jammed in his car. The gym in Canada is being called the Kitchener-Waterloo Gym, in Ontario, but Arnie's name is all over it. I want to set up another in America, but I haven't thought of where yet, maybe in Miami. I want to start a gym in Jamaica. Other than me, Michael McCallum, and Glen Johnson, there aren't many world-class fighters from Jamaica. I'm also doing a lot of charity events.

But the biggest joy is being with my family. My son plays little kid's soccer, but it's possible you might hear his name one day in the Olympics. I'm coach of his soccer team and when the other coach doesn't show up, it's me and 16 screaming kids *(laughs)*. The funny thing is my son was excited I was coaching. But whenever I tell him to do something, he doesn't listen *(laughs)*. I'll ask my mother if I was like that when I was his age, and she tells me I was worse. But I do see a lot of me in him. The best thing is when I go to his school—everyone knows I was a boxer. When someone asks me a question about it, my son responds, "He's the 'bestest' boxer there is" *(laughs)*. ■

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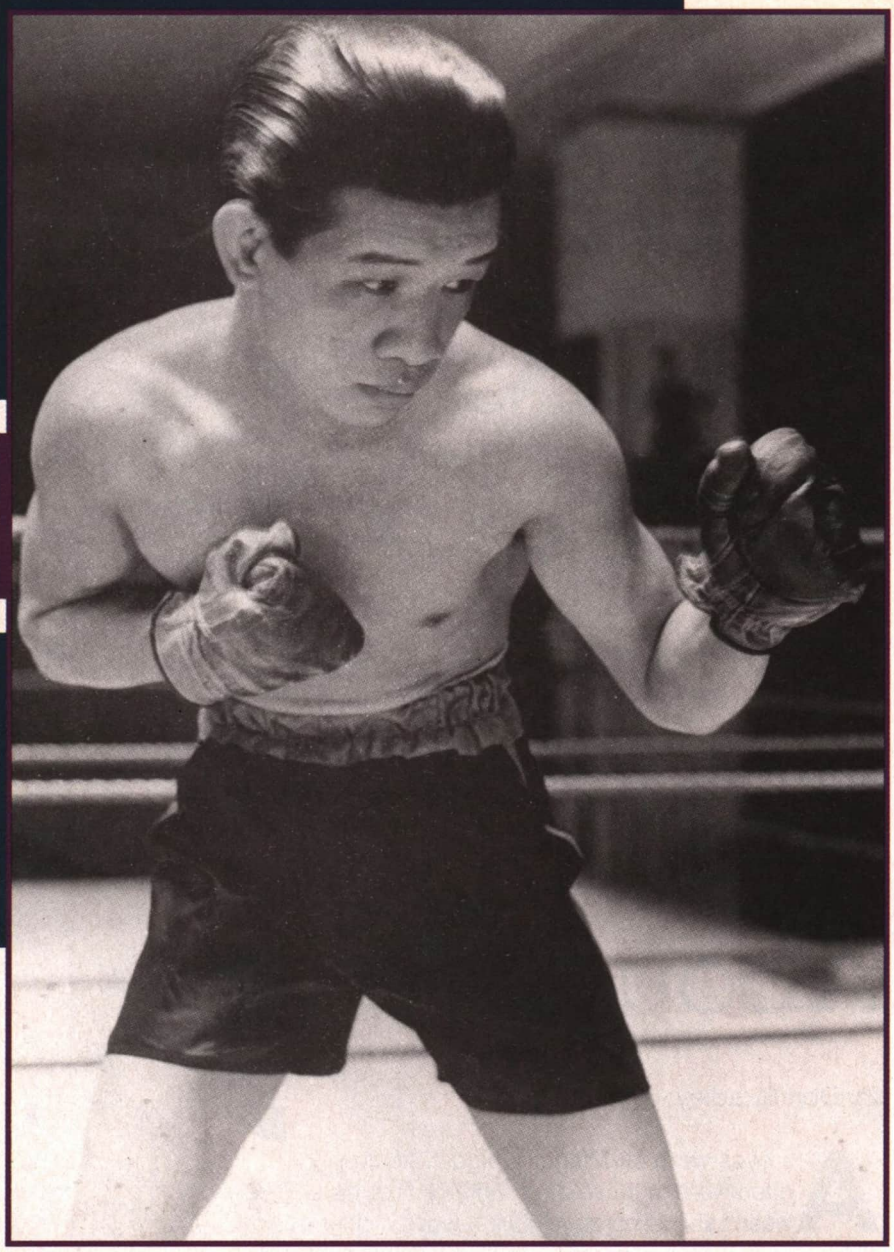
REMEMBERING MIDGET WOLGAST

"If You'd Seen Wolgast, You'd Have To Forget About Pep"

By Don Stradley

All eyes were on Midget Wolgast, as they often were in those days, but this time he wasn't stumbling out of a Hollywood nightclub at 3 a.m. with a perfumed honey on each arm, or sitting in a courtroom while an attorney tried to convince a jury that Wolgast was innocent of one thing or another. All that mattered on the afternoon of September 16, 1935, was his weight. Appearing somewhere between greyhound sleek and prison camp thin, the tiny Italian pug stepped on the scales, hoping to see numbers he hadn't seen in four years.

The motley group of gym veterans who handled Wolgast tried to appear calm. His opponent, Small Montana, a Filipino who kept a framed picture of the late, great Pancho Villa in his dressing room, smiled nervously. Leo Leavitt, on the cusp of becoming a big-time Oakland fight promoter, was anxious too. He'd booked the leaky Municipal Auditorium for what was supposed to be Oakland's first title bout in decades. Everything depended



Wolgast tried everything short of cutting off a limb to make weight for his flyweight title bout with Small Montana (pictured), and although he finally weighed in a quarter-pound under the 112-pound limit, Wolgast was totally drained and lost a 10-round decision.

on the scales. Training had been so intense that even Wolgast's manager, Johnny Keyes, had lost weight.

"The champ has been as irritable as a kitten with wet feet lately," Keyes told *The Oakland Tribune*. "When you start sympathizing with fighters training away pounds, think of the managers. We're entitled to a thought."

It had been Leavitt's idea. Leavitt had said to Midget, "You still have that New York flyweight title, dontcha? Let's bring it out of mothballs and have a championship fight right here in Oakland. Since Montana beat you in a non-title scrap a few months back, a rematch for the title would be colossal …"

Wolgast, usually somewhere north of 130, had less than a month to make 112. Since the only thing greater than Wolgast's love of food and spirits was his disdain for daylight and exercise, this was akin to melting a glacier with a ceiling fan. But with his legal fees piling up and the New York commission ready to pull the plug on his title reign, Wolgast decided to not be stubborn.

Wolgast's return to flyweight after four years became the bout's main talking point. Ed. W. Smith of THE RING wrote in 1935, "When I say that every trainer, dietician, physical instructor, and whatnot, to say nothing of a vast world of boxing enthusiasts, were intensely interested in the case, I am putting the whole thing mildly."

Keyes enlisted Jackie Conway, a former fighter of middling talents who now billed himself as an "expert on modern training methods." Conway's plan to shrink Wolgast involved sticking him in a steam-bath for several hours a day, and feeding him one daily portion of lettuce and a sliver of meat the size of a dollar bill.

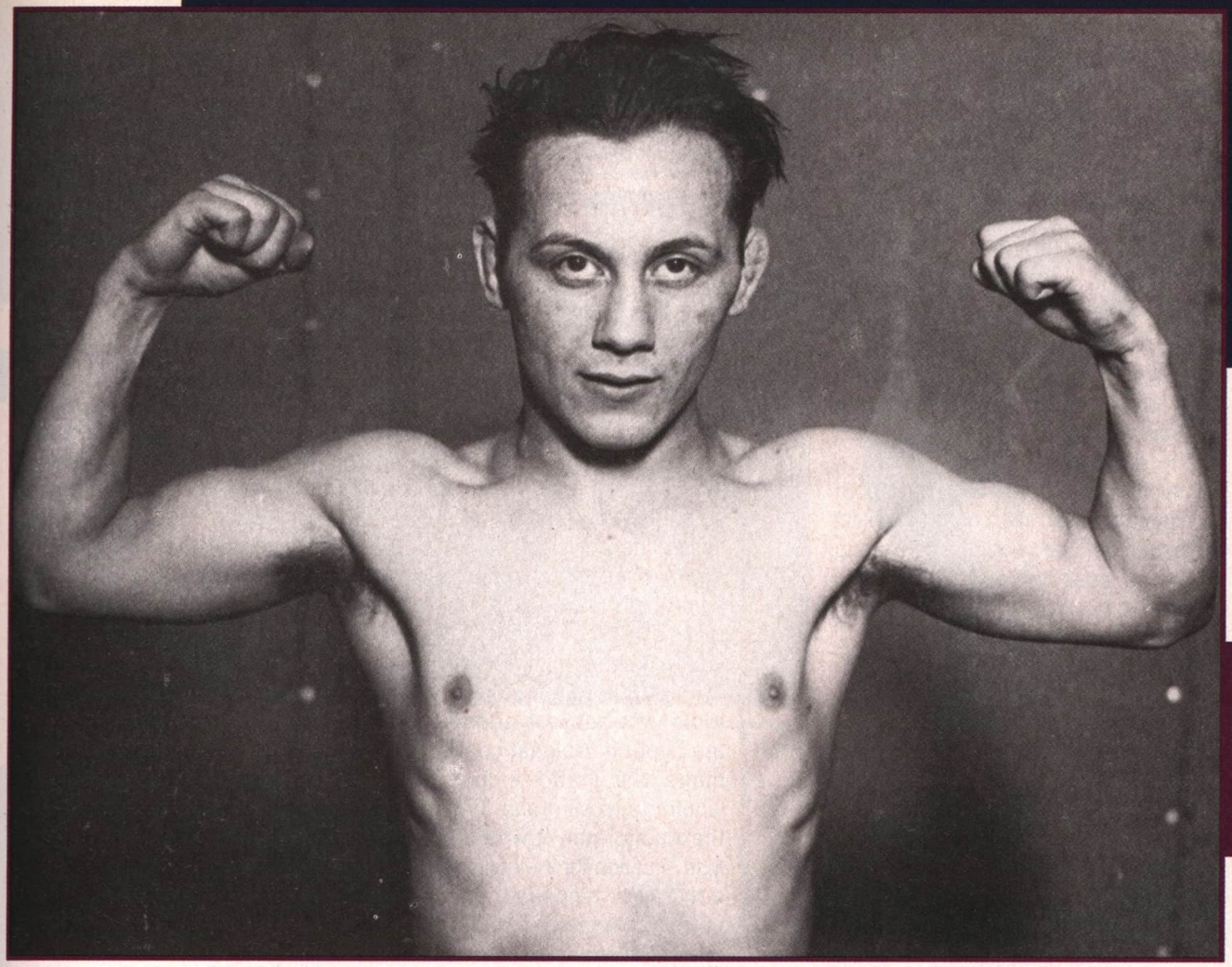
When Leavitt arranged for reporters to observe Wolgast's daily weigh-in at Duffy's Gymnasium, Keyes bellowed, "What is Wolgast, a monkey on a string? He's the champ, and we shouldn't be pushed around." Wolgast went through managers the way he went through women and booze, but Keyes was determined to maintain order in what had become an increasingly carnival-like atmosphere.

Three days before the fight, with Wolgast six pounds over the limit, Conway limited him to warm tea. According to Alan Ward of *The Oakland Tribune*, losing nearly 10 percent of his body weight in a 21-day period had left Wolgast "two shades whiter than a spook, and more fragile than a jackrabbit."

Joe Goossen, one of today's top handlers, told THE RING, "A fighter goes through hell, just living on crumbs and samples of food; a week before a fight he's living with unusual chemical changes in his body. I don't want to say he's walking on air; he's walking on electricity. What Wolgast risked was damage to his internal organs by depriving himself of nutrients. If I had a fighter in his situation, I'd have condemned the whole thing."

But when California boxing inspector Mike Gabbett barked out, "Wolgast, 111¾," the room rocked. Wolgast stepped off the scale and started collecting money from people who'd wagered he couldn't make 112. If he seemed cocky, it may have been because a return to flyweight was a return to where he'd been nearly invincible.

He'd been a South Philadelphia reform school boy, born Joseph Rob-



Mighty Midget: Despite his lax training ethic and a wild lifestyle, the young Wolgast was a marvel in the ring, using speed, smarts, and a wildly unorthodox style to beat many of the top little men of his era.

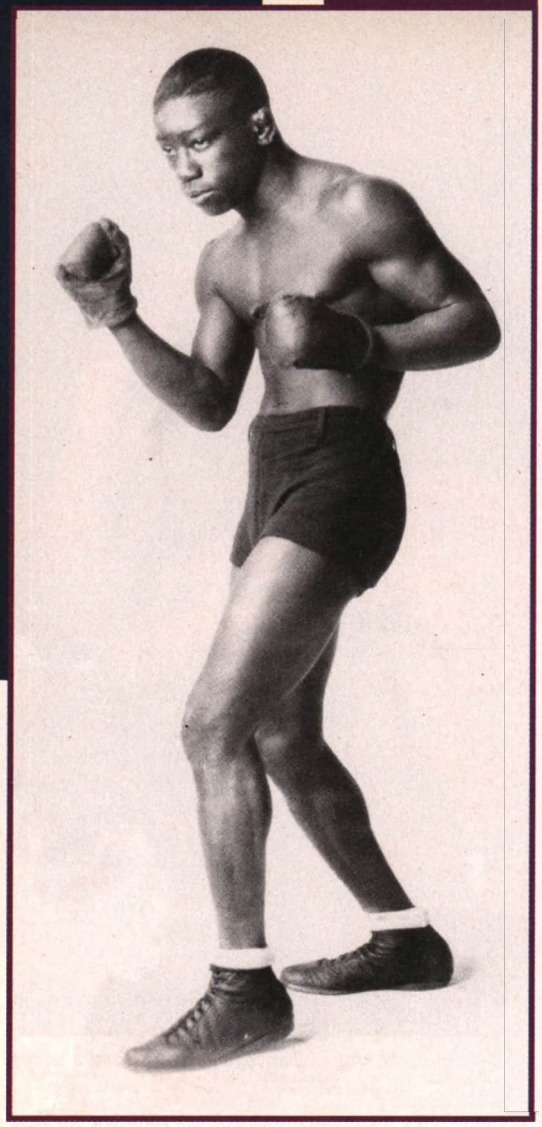
ert Loscalzo on July 18, 1910. Angelo Dundee, whose brother, Chris, was Midget's first manager, once described Philadelphia in those days by saying "it wasn't a city, it was a zoo." With boxing gyms on every street corner and fighters seeming to materialize out of the ether, it wasn't long before the 5'3" Loscalzo borrowed the name of another Philly fighter, Bobby Wolgast, and made his own professional boxing debut at age 15.

Wolgast developed a style that was one part boxing master, one part clown, and one part screaming buzz saw. "Golly, how that boy could ramble over the canvas," wrote Ward in 1942. "He was the speediest thing this writer ever has seen in the ring." Old-time Philly trainer Willie O'Neill once told *Boxing News*, "Willie Pep was a clever kid, but if you'd seen Midget Wolgast, you'd have to forget about Pep."

By the time he was 17, Wolgast was fighting at the Waltz Dream Arena in Atlantic City, where he dazzled former titlist Izzy Schwartz in an eight-round no-decision bout. Wins over Pinky Silverberg, Willie Davies, and Johnny McCoy moved Wolgast toward a bout with Cuba's Black Bill (real name: Eladio Valdes) for the vacant New York flyweight title, won by Wolgast on points over 15 rounds. *Time* magazine was ebullient over the kid with the flying hair, describing Wolgast's left hook as "working like the plunger of a sewing machine.

"Every three or four rounds of the 15 that kept the crowd roaring, the Midget showed a new trick: breaking a wild flurry he would stand stock still, holding his left hand high until Black Bill led at it, then whacking his right across; he caught Bill in the air coming off the ropes as a trap shooter catches a clay pigeon; he reached down, took hold of the rope, pulled this way and that for quick turns; he pressed both gloves against his own stomach like a waiter making a bow, then flashed them up in furious rataplans to Black Bill's stomach and head," *Time* reported.

After two defenses of the NYSAC title, Wolgast fought popular NBA titlist Frankie Genaro to a disappointing 15-round draw at Madison Square Garden. From there, he defeated a collection of top bantamweights including Speedy Dado (three times), Juan Zurita (three out of five), Archie Bell, and Pete Sanstol. Wolgast split a pair with Young Tommy, and went 1-1-1 with future bantam titlist Lou Salica. In 1933 Wolgast whipped Jackie Brown in London. Two weeks later he was in



Black Bill, as he looked in his prime. The Cuban was on a 26-bout winning streak when Wolgast beat him via 15-round decision for the vacant New York State Athletic Commission world flyweight title at Madison Square Garden in 1930. In those days, the NYSAC was boxing's most powerful governing body.

Paris, fighting French hero Valentin Angelmann to a draw.

But the miracle of Wolgast's career was that he achieved so much in the ring while dealing with a chaotic personal life. The Genaro bout was a dud because Wolgast had allegedly undergone treatment for a venereal disease that left him weak. Wolgast was also no stranger to criminal activity, involved in everything from kidnappings to passing counterfeit bills. Twice he'd been arrested and tried for "attacks" on women. He avoided prison, but his wild ways cost him his marriage. Telling the press that the flyweight title wasn't worth a dime, he fought most of 1934 and '35 as a pudgy featherweight. Purists wrote columns condemning his clowning style and his bloated gut.

When Wolgast was charged in 1934 with the mugging of a drunken war veteran, a committee voted to withdraw recognition of him as NYSAC champion, for it appeared he would do some jail time. Wolgast was exonerated, but the press habitually referred to him as a "former" flyweight champion. Even his admirers admitted he was a bit of a lame duck champion, having fought so many overweight bouts. To assure the locals that Montana and Wolgast were fighting for some kind of title, Leavitt invested $500 in a gaudy new belt to present to the winner.

A $1,000 forfeit posted by Wolgast's backers added to the hype. If Wolgast couldn't make 112, half the money would go to Montana, half to the Auditorium. It was a no-lose situation for the building—if the fight happened, fine; if not, the place needed a new coat of paint anyway.

Leavitt's work paid off, for on fight night the arena was packed. Fans didn't even mind when Leavitt jacked up the prices of the cheap seats at the last minute.

As for the fight, Wolgast fought hard, but weeks of being baked, boiled, and abused had left him empty. At one point, Wolgast missed so wildly that he pulled himself off-balance and fell to the canvas, dragging Montana down with him. Montana remained cool. He pumped his left into Wolgast's face, dropped him in the sixth, cut him, and skated to a 10-round points win. THE RING's correspondent credited Wolgast with putting up a "smashingly good fight," adding, "many thought it should have been a draw." Even drained to the bone, Wolgast put on a show.

Wolgast gained some revenge a few months later, defeating Montana in Los Angeles. This time Wolgast weighed 121, outweighing Montana by 11 pounds. Wolgast told *The Oakland Tribune* his days of making 112 were over. "A second attempt probably would put me under the ground," Wolgast said.

Resuming his career at featherweight, Wolgast remained popular in California. Actress Mae West, whose taste for small fighters was well known, would buy a block of tickets whenever he fought at Hollywood's Legion Stadium. Wolgast occasionally showed glimpses of his old form, such as when he battled Henry Armstrong for 10 tough rounds. When the decision was announced in Armstrong's favor, the crowd jeered.

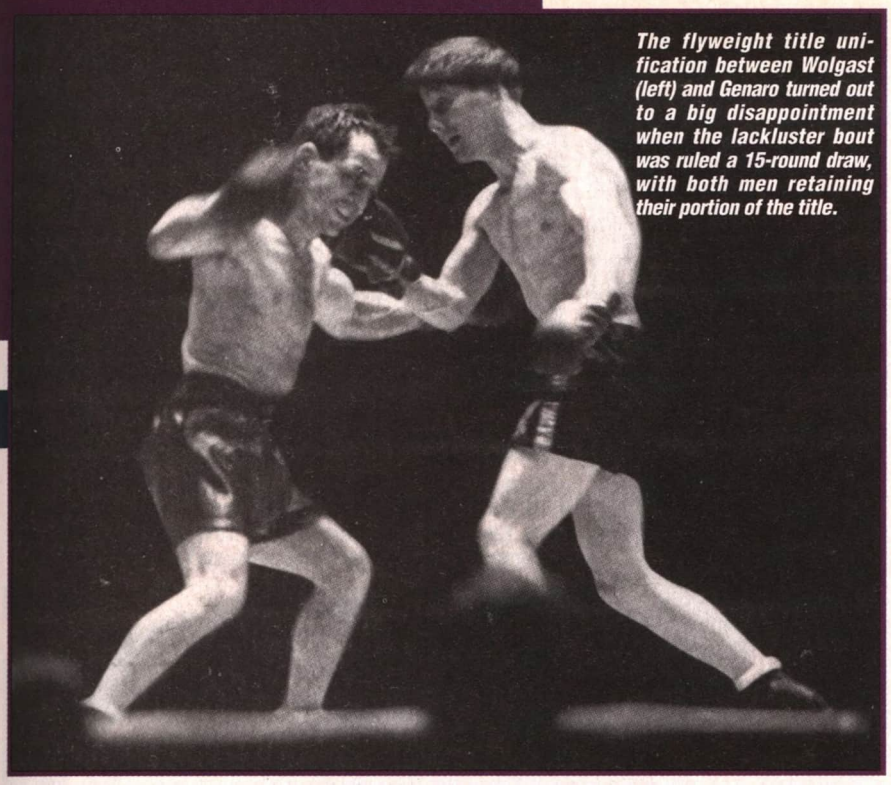
There followed a pathetic bout in Portland Oregon against Richie Fontaine. Referee Tom Louttit thumbed Wolgast out of the ring for, of all things, loafing.

Like a tired. old circus elephant on its last tour, Wolgast ended up back in Philadelphia where younger, fresher fighters routinely beat him. His final bout took place in March 1940 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Now a welterweight, Wolgast lost on points to Billy Morris, who was making his pro debut.

Overall, Wolgast compiled a record of 129-36-16 (15) with 21 no-decisions. He was posthumously enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2001.

As Wolgast faded from memory, Leavitt's career blossomed. The Oakland bout had been a success, and Leavitt remained a fixture in California's fight scene for decades. Johnny Keyes worked in boxing for several more years, and was allegedly the basis for one of Damon Runyon's fictional characters. Later in life he became a popular San Diego TV personality known as "Spaghetti Joe." Meanwhile, Wolgast became one of those figures you see hanging around gyms, slightly disheveled, someone who used to be somebody.

He once said the only opponent to hurt him was Speedy Dado. "And that includes that Mexican gal who hit me on the head with her slipper when I first fought [Rodolfo] Casanova in Mexico." The Mexican gal, according to some stories, was actress Lupe Velez, who allegedly punctured Midg-



The flyweight title unification between Wolgast (left) and Genaro turned out to a big disappointment when the lackluster bout was ruled a 15-round draw, with both men retaining their portion of the title.

et's scalp with a stiletto heel before he fought Zurita. But when you've had more than 200 fights and nearly that many women, it was tough to keep the plotlines straight.

Wolgast found some success training fighters, but in 1955 he began working at a seedy Philly bar, the Locust Cafe. One afternoon he collapsed at the bar, dead of a heart attack at 45.

Wolgast's early death was brought on by the scourge of all fighters: food. *The Oakland Tribune* once reported that Wolgast, now weighing 240, "had trouble getting around under his own power, and had become one of the most prodigious eaters in Philadelphia." No one who saw this butterball would've guessed he'd once been the speediest thing anyone had ever seen. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

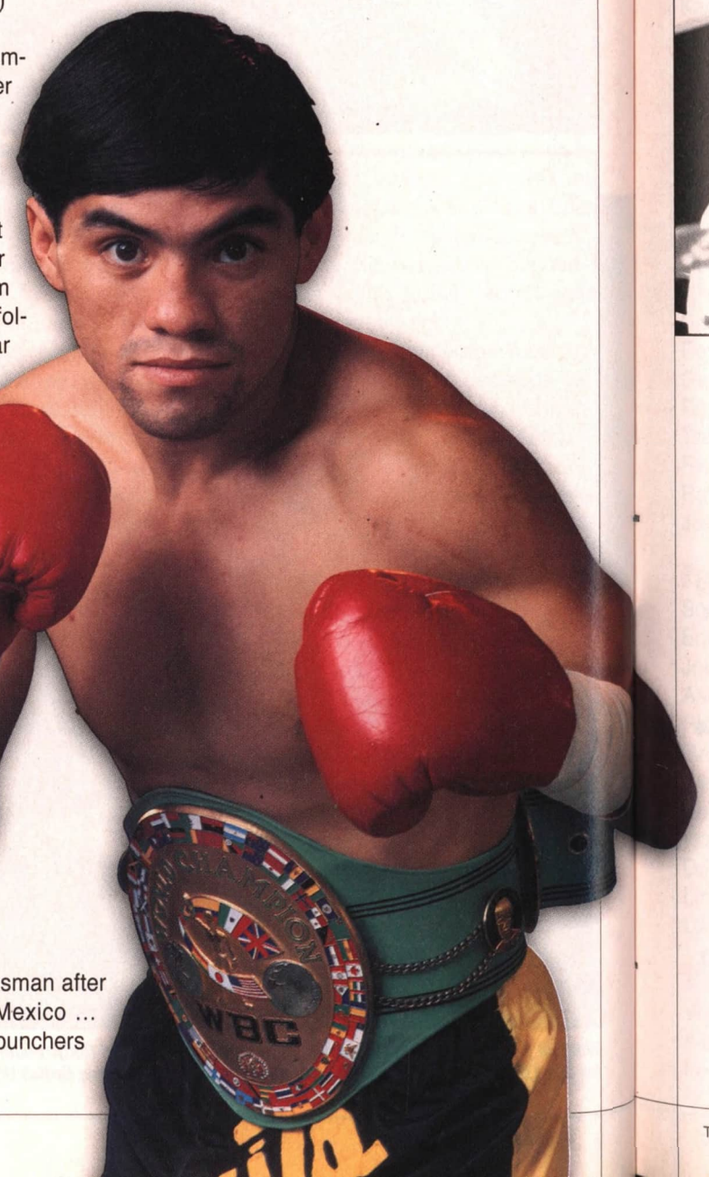
Wolgast joins South African heavyweight titleholder Ben Foord (left), South African middleweight champ Eddie Maguire (right), and three greyhounds for this 1933 publicity photo taken in England, where Wolgast beat British titleholder Jackie Brown in October 1933.

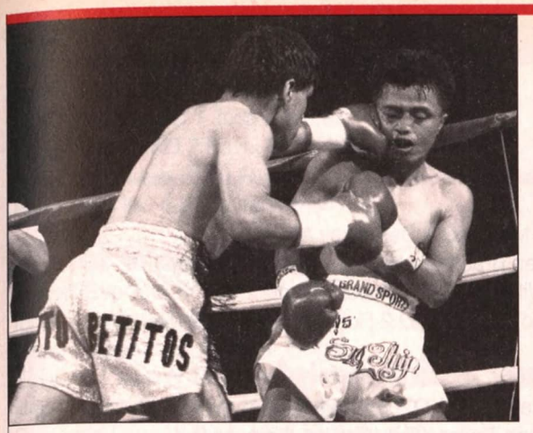
Hall of Fame Profile

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

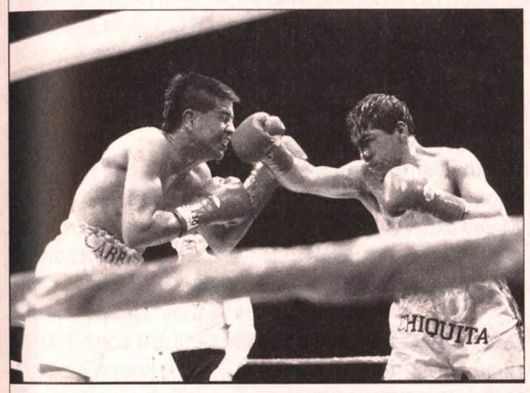
Humberto Gonzalez

Birthdate: March 25, 1966
Birthplace: Nezahualcoyotl, Mexico
Nickname: Chiquita
Weight Class: Junior Flyweight
Professional Record: 43-3 (31)
Titles Held: WBC Light Flyweight (June 25, 1989-December 19, 1990; June 3, 1991-March 13, 1993; February 19, 1994-July 15, 1995), IBF light flyweight (February 19, 1994-July 15, 1995)
Best Performances: Michael Carbajal (W 12, W 12), Jung Koo Chang (W 12), Yul Woo Lee (W 12), Francisco Tejedor (KO 3), Jesus Zuniga (KO 5), Juan Domingo Cordoba (KO 8), Domingo Sosa (W 12), Melchor Cob Castro (W 12, W 12)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 2006
Background: The 5'1" son of a butcher had an unblemished 23-0 amateur career before turning pro on September 4, 1984 ... Won Mexican junior flyweight title in 1988 ... Traveled to South Korea to capture the WBC 108-pound belt from Yul Woo Lee in June '89 ... Tallied five successful defenses before losing title and unbeaten status (after 30 straight wins) to Rolando Pascua, who knocked him out in December 1990 ... Regained WBC title from Melchor Cob Castro, who had subsequently taken the belt from Pascua, in June '91 ... Four more successful defenses followed prior to losing title in sensational give-and-take war with Michael Carbajal in March 1993. It was the first million-dollar junior flyweight bout in history ... Regained WBC title and won IBF belt in February '94 rematch with Carbajal ... Tallied three more successful title defenses, including a rubber match with Carbajal, before losing both belts to Saman Sorjaturong in July '95 ... Known as an aggressive, pressure fighter with a big punch throughout most of his career, but surprised by turning cutie to outbox Carbajal in their second and third fights ... Although he didn't fight in the U.S. until 1990, he soon became a fan favorite on both sides of the border, headlining 10 times at the Great Western Forum in Inglewood, California ... Ironically, two of his three pro losses were selected as THE RING's Fight of the Year, his first fight with Carbajal and his final bout, the loss to Sorjaturong. In both bouts, he had his foes on the floor before they rallied back to win in thrilling slugfests ... Became a successful businessman after retiring from the ring, opening three meat markets in Mexico ... Selected by THE RING in 2003 as one of the 100 greatest punchers of all-time, coming in at number 81.

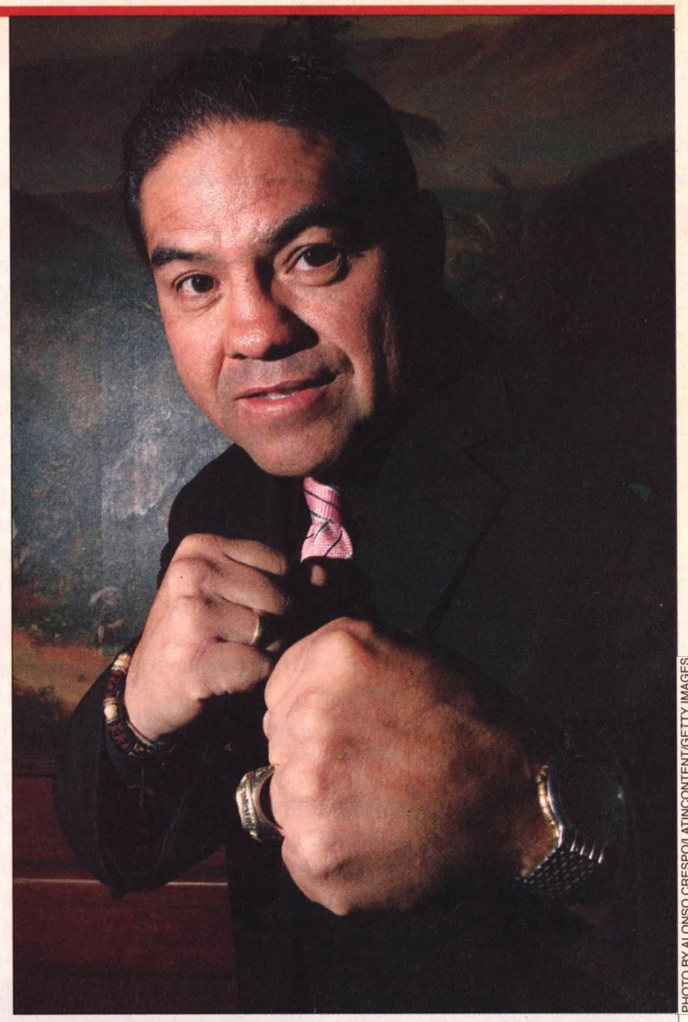




Gonzalez drives a right hand into the jaw of Thai challenger Napa Kiatwanchai en route to an easy second-round knockout in defense of the WBC junior flyweight strap. All told, "Chiquita" tallied 12 successful defenses in three title reigns.



bloody Gonzalez clips Michael Carbajal with right in their cond fight, a bout in which Gonzalez fooled Carbajal and the ndits by abandoning his slugging style and boxing his way a 12-round decision victory to regain the title.



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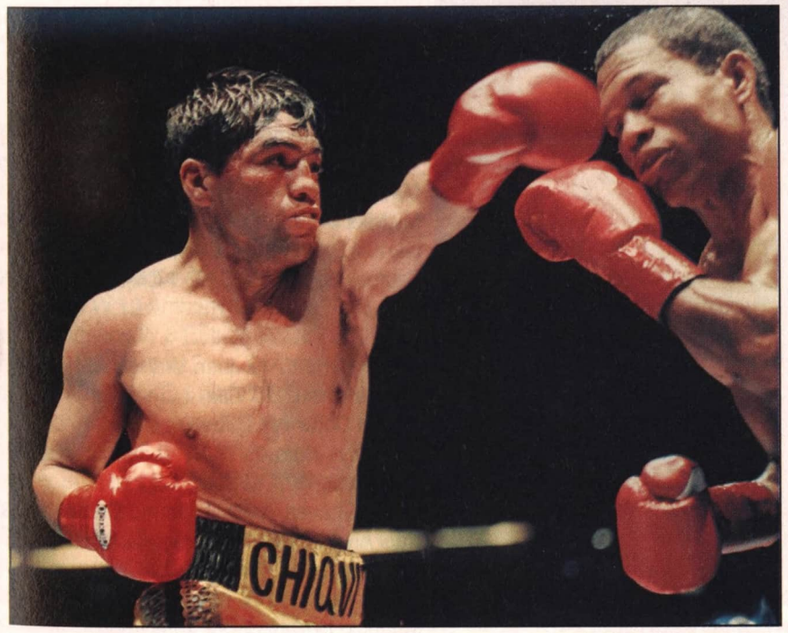


Still going strong: This is how Gonzalez looks today, 14 years after his final fight, a successful businessman and member of the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

In his final victory, Gonzalez knocked out Jesus Zuniga in the fifth round in defense of the WBC and IBF 108-pound belts. The bout took place at the Arrowhead Pond in Anaheim, California, in March 1995.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Wladimir Klitschko KO 10 Ruslan Chagaev
(Wins World Championship; Retains IBF Title)
Alexander Ustinov W 10 Michael Sprott
Jason Gavern W 8 Cisse Salif
Johnathon Banks KO 7 Paul Butlin
Cedric Boswell W 6 Serdar Uysal
Tye Fields KO 6 Nicolai Firtha
Denis Boytsov KO 6 Taras Bidenko
Travis Walker KO 2 Gary Butler
George Foreman III KO 1 Clyde Weaver
John Poore W 6 Jermell Barnes
Tor Hamer KO 2 Samuel Brown
Joey Abell KO 2 Larry White

Cruiserweights

Pawel Kolodziej W 12 Roman Kracik
Troy Ross W 10 Michael Simms
Serdar Sahin KO 10 Mario Stein

Light Heavyweights

Gabriel Campillo W 12 Hugo Garay
(Wins WBA Title)
Jean Pascal W 12 Adrian Diaconu
(Wins WBC Title)
Isidro Prieto W 10 Javier Corrales
Yusaf Mack KO 4 DeAndrey Abron
Juergen Braehmer KO 1 Antonio Brancalion
Phil Williams KO 7 Antwun Echols
Alessio Rondelli KO 2 Roberto Oliveira de Jesus

Super Middleweights

Kingsley Ikeke KO 5 Emmett Linton
Shannan Taylor KO 1 Kiatchai Singwancha
Keith Holmes W 8 Willis Lockett
Evert Bravo KO 1 Javier Rizo
David Lemieux KO 2 Martin Avila
Fernando Guerrero KO 2 Brian Norman
Farah Ennis W 8 Bobby Jordan

Middleweights

Gaetano Nespro W 10 Giovanni De Carolis
Anton Novikov W 10 Mada Maugo
Daniel Edouard KO 8 Dumont Welliver
Patrick Majewski W 8 Latif Mundy
Andy Lee W 6 Olegs Fedotovs
Matt Korobov W 4 Loren Myers

Junior Middleweights

Kermit Cintron W 12 Alfredo Angulo
Carlos Molina W 12 Danny Perez
Nikola Stevanovic W 12 Francesco Di Fiore
Timur Nergadze D 12 Sherzod Husanov
Pawel Wolak W 10 Vinroy Barrett
Juan Cabrera W 12 David Toribio
Tshepo Mashego W 12 Vincent Vuma
Fernando Pereyra W 10 Sergio Sanders
Joaquin Zamora KO 10 Joshua Renteria
Taisei Marumoto KO 8 Denyaso Sithsaithong
Yuki Nonaka Tech. Draw 8 Kazuhiko Hidaka
Maksim Bursak KO 4 Alexander Sipos
Michael Medina KO 3 Francisco Villanueva
Darnell Boone KO 7 Calvin Green
Zaurbek Baysangurov KO 1 Cristian De Martinis

Welterweights

Andre Berto W 12 Juan Urango
(Retains WBC Title)
Miguel Cotto W 12 Joshua Clottey
Diosbelys Hurtado W 12 Manuel Garnica
Jan Zaveck KO 12 Jorge Miranda
Diego Chaves W 10 Guillermo De Jesus Paz
Saul Alvarez KO 9 Jefferson Goncalo
Antonin Decarie W 12 Victor Castro
Laszlo Komjathi W 10 Janos Petrovics
Mauricio Herrera W 10 Jose Lugo

PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREZMA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Junior welterweight Robert Guerrero nails Efren Hinojosa with a left

Daisuke Nakagawa KO 7 Koshinmaru Saito
Dale Miles KO 7 Rob Kenney
Jorge Paez Jr. KO 7 Jose Ramirez
Danny Garcia KO 2 Pavel Miranda
Cecilia Braekhus W 10 Amy Yuratovac
Holly Holm KO 4 Duda Yankovich

Junior Welterweights

Robert Guerrero KO 8 Efren Hinojosa
Ionut Ion W 12 Walter Gomez
Ajose Olusegun W 12 Nigel Wright
Emiliano Casal W 10 Sento Martinez
Henry Aurad D 10 Ever Hernandez
Giuseppe Lauri W Disq. 10 Juho Tolppola
Christopher Sebire W 10 Rachid Drilzane
Enrique Colin KO 8 Alejandro Ramirez
Verquan Kimbrough W 8 Justo Sanchez
Manuel Leyva KO 6 Hector Guzman
Kanat Kartenbaev KO 6 Tia Koswara
Solomon Egberime KO 5 Mick Shaw
Nick Casal KO 3 Shad Howard

Lightweights

Alex Arthur KO 1 Mohamed Benbiou
Kengo Nagashima W 12 Hee-Jae Jo
Willie Limond W 12 Ryan Barrett
Jose Alfaro W 10 Moises Castro
Guillaume Salingue W 10 Afif Hamdani
Juan Carlos Martinez W 10 Jaime Sandoval
Daniel Estrada KO 8 Carlos Velasquez
Reyes Sanchez Tech. Draw 6 Rene Gonzalez
Gamaliel Diaz KO 5 Angel Rivero
Roy Manihuruk KO 3 Zoel Fidal
Tsukasa Takase KO 5 Laimangkorn Chuwatana
Ricardo Dominguez KO 4 Carlos Urias
Rafael Urias KO 4 Martin Fing
Jose Perea KO 2 Juan Sanchez

Junior Lightweights

Somsak Sithchatchawal W 11 Eddy Comaro
Eduardo Rios W 12 Cristian Arrazola
Joksan Hernandez W 12 Hector Velazquez
Aaron Melgarejo W 12 Mike Tumbaga
Ricky Burns W 12 Kevin O'Hara
Gary Sykes W 10 Anthony Crolla
Clarence Vinson W 8 Robert DaLuz
Humberto Martinez W Disq. 7 Jose Payares
Krzysztof Cieslak KO 6 Samuel Kamau
David Gomez KO 4 Jose Navarrete
Likar Ramos KO 3 Ernesto Morales
Lyndsey Scragg W 10 Kristine Shergold

Featherweights

Viorel Simion W 12 David Kiilu
Alberto Garza KO 12 Argel Salinas
Fernando Beltran W 12 Monty Clay
Chonlatarn Piriyapinyo KO 11 Jonel Alivio
Naoki Matsuda KO 10 Noriyuki Ueno
Juan Burgos W 10 Vyacheslav Gusev
Guillermo Soloppi W 10 Roberto Marin
Dai Davies KO 9 Robbie Turley
Bones Adams KO 8 Alex Baba
Ivan Hernandez KO 3 Jose Mendoza

Junior Featherweights

Hugo Cazares KO 1 Margarito Lopez
Mcbute Sinyabi KO 10 Luyanda Mrawuli
Jeremy Parodi W 10 Damir Bulatov
Ramon Maas W 10 Carlos Morales
Nobuto Ikehara Tech. Draw 8 Satoshi Niwa
Teon Kennedy W 8 Lucian Gonzalez
Salem Bouaita KO 8 Jorge Perez
Alejandro Valdez KO 7 Genaro Camargo

Bantamweights

Yonnhy Perez KO 12 Silence Mabuza
Donis Garcia W 12 Jonathan Arias
Juan Hernandez W 10 Hugo Jimenez

Junior Bantamweights

Takefumi Sakata W 10 Jin-Man Jun
Gerson Guerrero KO 9 Enrique Quevedo
Roberto Sosa KO 8 Elvis Garcia
Hugo Ruiz KO 7 Esau Gaona
Juan Sanchez Jr. KO 4 Jorge Cruz

Flyweights

Chris Edwards W 12 Usman Ahmed
Brix Ray W 10 Marlon Tapales
Karim Guerfi W 10 Julio Buitrago
Wilbert Uicab W 10 BJ Dolorosa
Raul Medina KO 7 Ariel Alassia

Junior Flyweights

Ivan Calderon Tech. Draw 6 Rodel Mayol
(Retains World Championship)
Edgar Sosa KO 5 Carlos Melo
(Retains WBC Title)
Omar Nino Tech. Win 8 Juanito Rubillar
Mfundo Gwayana D 12 Sizwe Sinyabi
Ramon Hirales W 12 Jose Varela
Noknoi Sitthiprasert W 10 Adi Nukung
Luis Lazarte KO 2 Pedro Cardenas
Elfego Sierra KO 8 Lino Alvarez

Strawweights

Oleydong Sithsamerchai Tech. Win 11 Muhammad Rachman
(Retains WBC Title)
Juan Palacios KO 10 Erik Ramirez
Ivan Meneses W 10 Jose Figueroa
Akira Yaegashi W 10 Kenichi Horikawa
Pit Anacaya W 10 Donnie Mabao

Daisuke Naito W 12 Xiong Zhao-Zhong

Tokyo, Japan: Following a near-fiasco of having his fifth defense of the WBC flyweight title moved from China to Japan just three days before, the 34-year-old Naito did just enough to keep the belt. He came off the deck in the sixth and held on to his early lead on points to earn a hard-fought unanimous decision over Xiong over 12 seesaw rounds at Differ Ariake. Judge Noppharat Sricharoen (Thailand) scored it 113-111, Jaebong Kim (Korea) had it 114-111, and Yuji Fukuchi (Japan) tallied 114-110, all for the Japanese titlist.

It was a rough-and-tumble, free-swinging battle with both men throwing wild blows from the outset. The Japanese press had been ready to label the fight a mismatch, but because Naito fought an undisciplined fight, it turned out to be an exciting, competitive affair. Standing five inches shorter than Naito at only 4'11" and having lost to a mediocre Filipino named Julius Alcos on points last November, Xiong, 26, turned out to be game and durable, and he could punch. Naito's overconfidence and underestimation of the Chinese challenger helped account for this being his toughest defense since he dethroned Pongsaklek Wonjongkam in 2007.

Naito, 112, took the initiative with ease in the first two rounds. In the third, Xiong, 112, called "Chinese Tyson" due to his very muscular physique, landed a vicious left hook that stunned the beltholder. With 10 seconds remaining in the round, a signal sounded and Xiong thought the round was over and returned to his corner. Naito promptly swarmed over the defenseless challenger with solid combinations from behind. Xiong fell into the ropes, which prevented him from going down just before the bell came to his rescue.

In the fourth, Naito began to use jabs because his corner realized it might be risky to mix it up with Xiong. Moving to and fro, Naito dominated the round but suffered a nasty laceration over the left eyebrow. At first referee Bruce McTavish (Philippines) declared that it had been opened by a legal blow, but he consulted with the judges and corrected his decision, ruling it to be the result of an accidental butt. The uncut Xiong was penalized a point in accordance with the WBC's rules. Also in following the WBC's rules, the open scoring system was used, and after the fourth, Naito was leading 39-36 (twice) and 38-37.

In the fifth, Naito made good use of his footwork and occasionally landed roundhouse rights to the shorter challenger to win another point. But he sustained another gash, this time over the right eye, which caused Xiong to be penalized again.

The sixth round changed the complexion of the fight, as Xiong dropped the titleholder with a looping left hook. Naito got up and rode his bicycle for the rest of the round rather than fighting back toe-to-toe. That was probably a smart move, as he recovered and won the seventh round with fast punches. But in the eighth, Xiong broke through again and caught Naito with a vicious right that badly shook him up. After the eighth, the tallies were announced as 75-74 (twice) and 76-73, all for Naito. If not for the two penalty points, Xiong would have been in the lead.

But in the final stages of the fight, the difference in experience became apparent. Naito cleverly utilized his feet and made Xiong miss repeatedly. The local fighter was in command in the ninth and 10th. But in an ironic twist, Xiong suffered a gash over the right eyebrow caused by a butt, so the ref deducted a point from Naito.

Xiong, 12-2-1 (8), did better in round 11, almost turning the tables with his relentless assault. Xiong kept stalking the fading champ with left and right swings, missing most but scoring occasionally. Though in crisis, Naito kept his composure and lasted through the critical moments. In the 12th and final session, he displayed his cleverness in outmaneuvering and outpunching the less skillful Chinese challenger. He showed his determination and pride as the beltholder, and dominated the last three minutes to secure the unanimous decision.

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Xiong(left) gave Naito a much tougher fight than anticipated

Naito, 35-2-3 (22), said to the crowd afterward, "I feel sorry not to be able to show a good fight. Xiong was too short and really difficult to cope with. I'll train hard and will display a better performance next time."

It was a strange show, with only a single bout without any preliminary fights. The show was moved on short notice because Chinese promoter Zovi Promotions failed to get permission from the government in time to use the intended arena. Unfortunately, it seems China is not yet ready to host major fights. First, there is no legitimate national commission to control and regulate professional boxing. Second, there are no trustworthy and responsible local promoters who can proceed with such events. Third, the Chinese government is still less than cooperative in helping professional boxing events to materialize. The last-minute failure to stage this event in China certainly doesn't bode well for major American promoters such as Bob Arum planning to do business in the country.

Promoter: **Miyata Promotions**
(5-26-09)
Joe Koizumi

Denkaosan Kaovichit W 12
Hiroyuki Hisataka

Uttaradit, Thailand: On paper, it looked like a classic example of the new beltholder getting his easy first defense, as Hisataka had no business whatsoever challenging for a major title. But Hisataka rose to the occasion and Denkaosan, perhaps overlooking his opponent, sunk to meet him, and the result was a shockingly narrow escape for the WBA flyweight titleholder via split decision at Central Stadium.

At age 32, 48-fight veteran Denkaosan appeared to be peaking coming into this bout, having splattered Takefumi Sakata in the second round in December '08 to claim his first alphabet belt. His only loss was a TKO to Eric Morel way back in 2002, and there was no logical reason to think Hisataka could hang defeat number two on him. The 24-year-old challenger had lost four of his previous six fights, including a clear points defeat to Sakata for the same belt last July, as well as a loss to a 10-6 Kenji Yoshida. That the WBA saw fit to grant this Japanese clubfighter two title shots in a 10-month span was mystifying, to say the least.

Denkaosan, 112, Samui, Thailand, got off to a solid start, aggressively hunting down his opponent. But Hisataka, 112, Osaka, Japan, proved adept at counterpunching and kept the rounds, and the overall scorecards, close. Through six rounds, the titlist seemed to have a lead thanks to his aggression, but it wasn't a comfortable lead.

In the eighth round, everything started to unravel for the Thai. He seemed to be tiring, raising questions of whether he'd prepared seriously for this fight, and he lost a point in

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Miguel Cotto

When it comes to being named Fighter of the Month, how you play the game is sometimes just as important as whether you win or lose. Luckily for Miguel Cotto, he did indeed win against Joshua Clottey. But for the Puerto Rican superstar, it was the brave manner in which he fought more so than the end result that earned him top honors this month.

Cotto suffered a horrid cut on his left eyebrow in the third round and would have been justified in welcoming a technical draw or technical decision anytime over the next several rounds, but he insisted on battling through the gory handicap. Then there were times in the middle and late rounds when all of those Clottey right hands that he couldn't see were adding up, but Cotto refused to fold. He behaved like a true fighter, gave everything he had in the last two rounds, and pulled out a split decision.

Obviously, if Cotto hadn't gotten the decision, he wouldn't be the Fighter of the Month, so winning was important. But Cotto is entering that rare realm where he'll sell tickets no matter what because of his heart. Cotto has guts to accompany the blood, and that's why he was most deserving of The Ring's recognition this month.

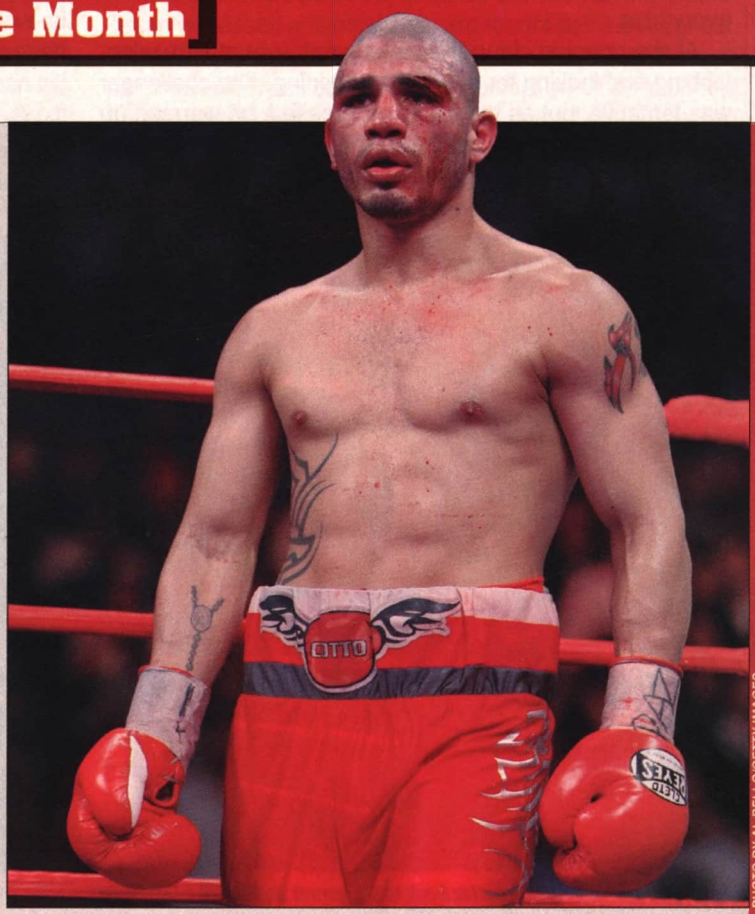


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

the eighth for punching Hisataka, 17-8-1 (6), in the back of the head. Denkaosan, 47-1-1 (20), rebounded to capture the ninth and 10th rounds, but it was all Hisataka in the 11th and 12th, as the beltholder just didn't have much energy left.

There was uncertainty in the air as the bout went to the scorecards, but Denkaosan got the nod. Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa) and Kwang Tak Yoon (Korea) both saw it 115-112 in his favor, while Silvestre Abainza (Philippines) scored it 115-113 for Hisataka.

Promoter: **Galaxy Boxing Promotions**
(5-26-09)

Toshiaki Nishioka KO 3 Jhonny Gonzalez

Monterrey, Mexico: With one punch that mirrored the knockout scored by Manny Pacquiao over Ricky Hatton earlier in the month, Tokyo's Nishioka floored and flattened Gonzalez before a suddenly silent crowd of 12,523 at the Arena Monterrey. Weathering a first-round knockdown and confident aggression by the former bantam titlist from Mexico City, Nishioka, 32, secured his first defense of the WBC super bantamweight belt when referee Kenny Bayless (USA) waved the fight off at 1:20 of the third.

At the weigh-in, in which both tipped the beam at the 122-pound limit, the Japanese titlist appeared nervous while Gonzalez, backed by a hometown crowd, was eerily confident. That confidence carried over into the ring—until a left hand from the southpaw beltholder shattered everything.

At the opening clang, Nishioka went right at Gonzalez, jabbing and looking for a left hand opening. The challenger was tentative, but as the round progressed, he warmed up with a solid left hook to the body. Then, with 20 seconds left on the clock, Gonzalez let loose with a straight right hand that floored Nishioka in the neutral corner. As the crowd cheered Gonzalez, Nishioka got up at six, somewhat shaken, and weathered the remainder of the round.

The two danced around the center of the ring in the second round, both jabbing, Gonzalez looking for a repeat performance with his right and Nishioka trying to set up his left. Edging most of the round, Gonzalez, 27, sprung into action in the final moments, landing a big right that drove Nishioka into his corner.

Picking up the pace and nearing what was assumed to be a knockout win, Gonzalez tore into Nishioka as the third round began. The titlist, however, was starting to land his speedy straight left.

Then it happened.

One moment the crowd was chanting the name of their Mexican would-be king; the next, they were as floored as their hero when a straight left hand snaked through the air. Gonzalez hit the canvas like an anvil, horizontal and out.

Nishioka sprang toward the neutral corner, just as ref Bayless, crouched alongside Gonzalez, began his count—a count that woke up the challenger. At eight, Gonzalez, 40-7 (34), struggled to clear his head and get his legs beneath him, but the attempt was futile.

Bellowing his victory cry, Nishioka was raised skyward by his cornermen. He pumped his gloves into the air while the challenger was consoled, all thoughts of victory snatched away with a single left hand.

"From the moment I threw the knockout punch, I knew he would not get up. I am very happy with the victory, and to have defeated another Mexican," said Nishioka, 34-4-3 (21). He had defeated Mexico's Genaro Garcia four months earlier to claim the WBC belt.

Promoter: **Promociones del Pueblo**
(4-23-09)

Chris Cozzone

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Referee Bayless helps Gonzalez back to his corner as Nishioka celebrates

Rafael Marquez KO 3
Jose Francisco Mendoza

Monterrey, Mexico: Hoping to shake off an accumulated 14 months of ring rust with a quiet return, former bantamweight and super bantam king Marquez finished off Colombian Mendoza with a bang of a right hand in round three.

Fighting in the co-feature to Nishioka-Gonzalez at the Arena Monterrey, Marquez and Mendoza, both weighing in at the featherweight limit of 126, were slated for 10, but, after two less than impressive rounds, the 34-year-old Marquez put an end to the Colombian's crafty counterpunching with a right hand that ended both the Mexico City fighter's long-awaited return to the ring and Mendoza's hope of an upset.

Round one was a cautious one, with Marquez pressing the action. Both jabbed while Marquez reached with his right.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Marquez launches comeback with TKO of Mendoza

Seeing a rusty Marquez motivated the 37-year-old Mendoza in the second stanza. Fighting entirely in the middle of the ring, he landed several rights on Marquez, who came up short with anything except a jab.

Mendoza's counterpunching and lead rights continued to score against an out-of-form Marquez—that is, until a big right hand finally connected, staggering the Colombian. Marquez closed the gap on his wounded prey and, trapping Mendoza against the ropes, battered him with a combination that sent him to the canvas.

As Marquez walked to the neutral corner, referee Carlos Garcia (Mexico) halted the action at the official time of 2:26.

Mendoza, now 0-3-1 in his last four, fell to 21-3-2 (17).

"I am now ready to fight the best fighters in the world," proclaimed Marquez, 38-5 (34).

Earlier in the week, Marquez stated that he was targeting a fourth fight with Israel Vazquez. The two fought a classic trilogy in 2007-2008.

"Give the people what they want," said Marquez. "I would like a fourth—if not a fifth or sixth—with Vazquez."

With the win, Marquez remains the WBC's number-one contender for the belt retained later that night by Nishioka.

Promoter: **Promociones del Pueblo**
(4-23-09)
Chris Cozzone

Giacobbe Fragomeni D 12
Krzysztof Wlodarczyk

Rome, Italy: No one should doubt the heart of Fragomeni, 199, Milan, Italy, after he climbed off the canvas in the ninth round and rallied remarkably over the final three to secure a draw against Wlodarczyk, 199, Piaseczno, Poland, who towered over the 5'9" Italian by four inches. It was Fragomeni's first defense of the WBC cruiserweight title that he won in a vacant title bout against Rudolf Kraj in October 2008.

The sellout crowd of 3,040 inside the Eternal City's Gran Teatro witnessed a compelling, hard-fought battle throughout. Wlodarczyk's significant advantage in height and reach presented a serious obstacle to Fragomeni, who had to burrow his way inside before he was able to unload his hooks and uppercuts. Wlodarczyk, a former IBF cruiserweight titleholder who lost that belt by majority decision against American Steve Cunningham in 2007, repeatedly picked off Fragomeni when the Italian allowed any distance to develop between them. It made for an intriguing encounter that Wlodarczyk looked set to win before Fragomeni's late and brave comeback.

As is customary, Fragomeni, 26-1-1 (10), whose sole defeat came against former undisputed cruiserweight champion David Haye in 2006, started slowly and Wlodarczyk was able to build up a lead over the first two rounds with his long jab. But Fragomeni found his range in the third round and began to throw three- and four-punch combinations, some of which found their target and chipped away at Wlodarczyk's confidence. After four rounds, the Pole had a two-point lead on one judge's scorecard while his two colleagues had it even.

Wlodarczyk, 41-2-1 (31), came on strongly again in the middle rounds, forcing Fragomeni to the ropes, where the Italian's underrated jab became obsolete. Fragomeni continued to throw clusters of blows, but the challenger had seized the initiative. One judge had Wlodarczyk three points ahead at the end of eight rounds, but, incredibly, another judge had Fragomeni in front by one point while the third judge continued to have them level.

The seemingly decisive moment came in the ninth round when Wlodarczyk floored Fragomeni with a powerful left hook

to the jaw. The Italian was in serious trouble as he climbed unsteadily back to his feet, and a barrage of blows put him down again. But British referee Ian John Lewis did not take up a count, having determined that Wlodarczyk hit Fragomeni after he had touched down on the canvas. This became a controversial call afterward, with the Polish contingent arguing that it would have been a 10-7 round if the knockdown had been scored, while the Italians were able to respond that Wlodarczyk was fortunate not to have incurred a one-point deduction.

Fragomeni knew that he would have to dig deep if he was to cling on to his belt and he came out with renewed resolve in the 10th round. The Italian outworked his 27-year-old foe with a remarkably sustained effort for a man just three months from turning 40. In fact, it was Wlodarczyk who wearied as the fight entered the latter stages and Fragomeni, unquestionably, was the fighter coming forward when the final bell intervened.

Esa Lehtosaari (Finland) scored the bout 114-114, Richard James Davies (England) had Wlodarczyk ahead by 116-112, and Robin Dolpierre (France) had Fragomeni ahead by 114-113. THE RING scored 115-113 for Wlodarczyk.

"I would love to fight Tomasz Adamek, and this is a bout that my promoter is trying to make," said Fragomeni.

Promoter: **Salvatore Cherchi**

(5-16-09)

Brian Doogan

Yonnhy Perez KO 12 Silence Mabuza

Johannesburg, South Africa: Just five weeks after Carl Froch knocked out Jermain Taylor in the 12th round of a fight he trailed on the scorecards, history repeated itself half a world away and 50 pounds below when Perez pulled the last-round-stoppage trick against Mabuza at Springs Indoor Arena. Mabuza was ahead on the cards by a couple of points when Perez produced a dramatic ending at 1:06 of the 12th to win the IBF bantamweight title eliminator and position himself for a shot at the winner of Joseph Agbeko vs. Vic Darchinyan.

The 31-year-old Mabuza, whose only previous losses both came at the hands of Rafael Marquez, was the slight prefight favorite against the unbeaten but relatively untested Perez. And for most of the highly entertaining fight, the hometown fighter showed why he deserved to be the favorite, using his superior aggression to build a lead. Mabuza, 116¾, dominated the fight when in close, working the body diligently, but the taller Perez, 117¾, Santa Fe Springs, California, via Cartagena, Colombia, kept the fight competitive with effective long-range work and counterpunching.

As the fight wore on, Perez, 30, landed more and more of those counters, thanks to Mabuza leaving himself open as he pursued the Colombian. Mabuza seemed to be tiring in the late rounds and his face was beginning to swell, but it was surprising just the same when Perez broke through in the final round. Just seconds into the final frame, a sudden right to the jaw stunned Mabuza, 22-3 (18), and a straight left put him down. He beat the count but didn't have his legs under him, and when Perez sent him staggering across the ring with a follow-up barrage, ref Kenny Chevalier (USA) waved off the fight. The stoppage was arguably premature, but there were nearly two minutes left in the round and it was unlikely that Mabuza's legs were going to keep him up that long.

"My corner told me I was losing," said Perez, 19-0 (14). "I knew I had to throw decisive shots and try to knock him out. I countered him and hit him right on the button. It was not a lucky shot. He was in his hometown and we battled hard. Mabuza is a lion, but I knew some close rounds were going to go his way. I'm ready for the big challenge now."

That big challenge is either Agbeko or Darchinyan, and having come through a tough fight like this, Perez just might be prepared for that level of opposition.

Promoters: **Branco Sports Productions, Gary Shaw Productions, Thompson Boxing Promotions**

(5-29-09)

Oleydong Sithsamerchai Tech. Win II Muhammad Rachman

Patong, Thailand: In a strawweight division that boasts three undefeated titleholders, Oleydong preserved that statistic by scoring his third successful defense of the WBC belt, getting the better of former IBF titlist Rachman at Bangla Stadium. The 23-year-old Thai titlist was firmly in command when the bout

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Perez upsets Mabuza in South Africa

was stopped in the 11th due to Rachman's head-clash-induced cuts, and despite losing two points per the WBC's head-clash rule, Oleydong prevailed on the cards.

Rachman, 105, Blitar, Indonesia, was the aggressor from the outset, but the counterpunches of the southpaw Oleydong, 105, Bangkok, Thailand, carried most of the rounds. The most telling blows, however, were scored with heads and not fists. In rounds three, seven, and 11, the fighters banged heads, and on the latter two occasions, Rachman was cut, costing Oleydong points. The Indonesian "Rock Breaker" had a strong 10th round, appearing to briefly stun the titlist, but in the 11th, the bout came to an abrupt end when a collision of heads left Rachman with a deep gash. Even with the second point deduction, Oleydong, 31-0 (12), was ahead on all cards by scores of 105-103 (twice) and 106-101.

PHOTO BY DAVID HARDENBERG/GETTY IMAGES

Mundine floors Geale in the second round

There was some talk immediately afterward of the 37-year-old Rachman, 62-8-5 (31) and a loser of three out of his last four fights, retiring, but the veteran ex-titlist quickly put that talk to rest. "If I wasn't hurt [from the head clashes] I could have knocked out Oleydong," he said. "I hurt Oleydong in round 10, so I feel I'm still capable of being a world champion again." Team Rachman went so far as to ask the WBC to mandate a rematch, claiming that Oleydong intentionally butted the challenger and should have been disqualified.

(5-29-09)

Anthony Mundine W 12 Daniel Geale

Brisbane, Australia: It was an intriguing fight when it was first made and it proved to be one of the most thrilling and high quality boxing matches seen in this country in many years. Mundine, who was rated number five at super middleweight by THE RING, and Geale, who was rated number 10 at middleweight, battled to a standstill over 12 rounds. While Mundine won a split decision, Geale only enhanced his reputation in defeat.

The 34-year-old Mundine, 159¾, Sydney, Australia, a former WBA super middleweight titleholder, was in only his second match since dropping down to middleweight. The 28-year-old Geale, 159, Launceston, Australia, a gold medalist at the 2002 Commonwealth Games, was looking to make a name for himself against his countryman. The younger boxer demonstrated intensity and aggression from the opening bell. A left hook and right hand that landed flush on Mundine's jaw reinforced Geale's early confidence.

After winning the opening stanza on the three official judges' cards, Geale was knocked down by Mundine's sweetly timed left hook to open round two. Geale nodded to his corner that he was unhurt as referee Gary Dean (Australia) issued an eight-count.

In round three, Geale's clean punches were impressive. Mundine landed a stinging hook to the body in round four, which momentarily had Geale backing off.

Geale's bristling pace was pushing Mundine to his limits. Round five was another close one, with few punches separating the boxers. The sixth round saw the first of five mid-round stoppages over the next four rounds for loose tape on Mundine's gloves to be re-taped. The breaks brought boos from fans for what they saw as an attempt by Mundine to garner extra respite from Geale's onslaught.

Both men landed clean punches in the seventh and eighth and split the rounds as the flow of the bout went both ways. In round nine, which Geale won unanimously on all three scorecards, referee Dean issued an official warning to Mundine for the use of his elbows. In the final seconds, Mundine went down after receiving a punch to the head from Geale, but it was ruled the result of a slip, as Mundine's back leg lost traction on an advertising logo on the canvas.

In round 10, Mundine sustained a cut above his right eye from a Geale punch. The round was another unanimous one for Geale on the scorecards.

"The Man" Mundine, 36-3 (23), was warned for a low blow in round 11 and then followed with a sweet left hook and two right hands. Down again from a slip early in round 12, Mundine

was hurt by Geale, 21-1 (13), only to rally with strong flurries to the final bell. Neither boxer looked confident of victory ahead of the announcement of the official verdict. The crowd of around 8,000 people at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre gave both boxers a standing ovation.

Mundine won on the scorecards of judges Derek Milham (Australia), who had it 116-113, and Markus McDonnell (England), who saw it 114-113. Richard Green (USA) scored the fight 115-112 for Geale. THE RING gave Mundine the decision, 114-113.

"I want to thank Daniel Geale," said Mundine. "I knew it would be a tough fight and it was."

Promoter: **Tony Mundine**
(5-27-09)
Paul Upham

Andre Ward W 12 Edison Miranda

Oakland, California: After plodding through his first five years as pro against limited opposition, 2004 Olympic gold medalist Ward finally emerged as a contender by dominating former top-10 middleweight Miranda in front of 7,818 hometown fans at Oracle Arena.

Miranda, 167½, was a major step up in competition for Ward, 167½, whose previous best wins were against the likes of Henry "Sugar Poo" Buchanan, Jerson Ravelo, and Rubin Williams. Miranda, 32-4 (28), had dropped three of his previous nine bouts, but the Colombian's losses were against middleweight champ Kelly Pavlik and 160-pound beltholder Arthur Abraham (twice).

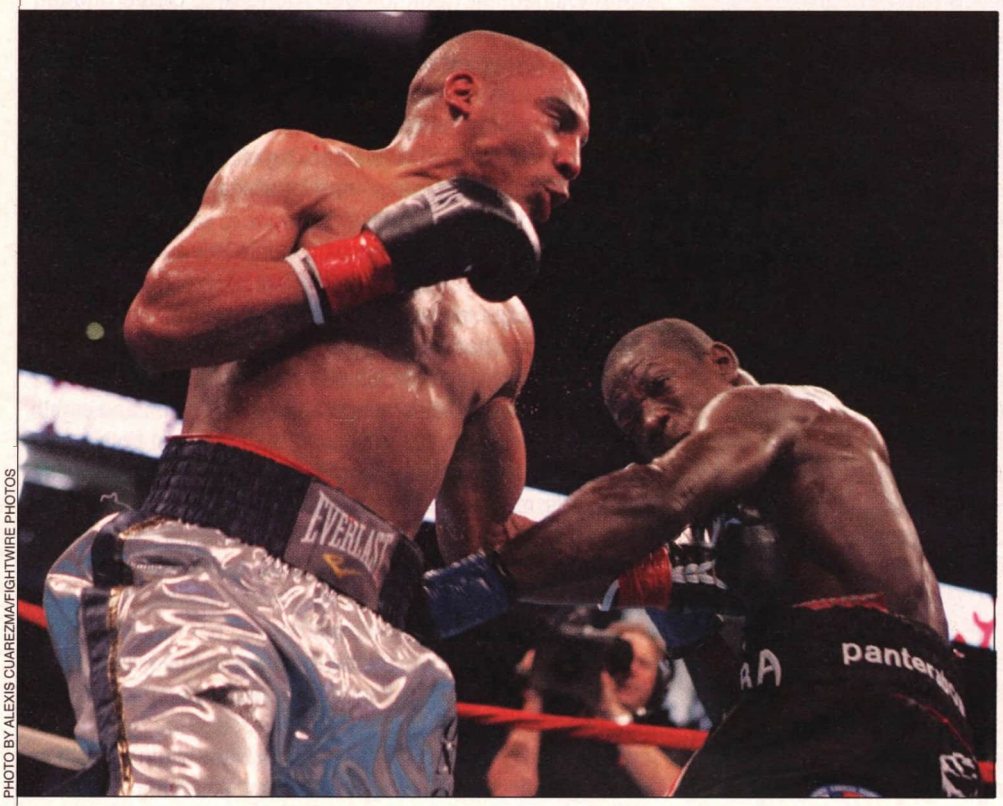
Ward, 19-0 (12), couldn't duplicate Pavlik and Abraham by scoring a knockout, but he still looked to be top-tier material in outclassing Miranda. The 28-year-old slugger, predictably, went after Ward in the opening minute. He opened a cut over Ward's left eye with a headbutt that looked intentional, but was ruled accidental by ref Jon Schorle (USA). The 25-year-old Ward remained calm and used his faster hands to pelt Miranda with combinations to the head and body throughout the round.

Miranda landed some powershots early in the second, when he reopened the cut above Ward's eye. He also landed a few right hands late in the round, though Ward never appeared in any danger. Ward's cutman, Jacob "Stitch" Duran, had the wound under control by the third, when Ward began taking command with his vastly superior boxing skills.

Ward switched repeatedly from orthodox to southpaw, which seemed to completely baffle Miranda. He attacked the head and body from different angles, and his lateral movement and hand speed allowed him to easily elude and counter Miranda's increasingly one-shot-at-a-time attack. He also showed a physical side at times by pushing Miranda back and throwing an occasional forearm under his opponent's chin.

Miranda was competitive in the sixth round, when he landed a few solid right hands and had Ward's left eye swelling. But "Pantera" looked spent from that point. The rest of the fight he gamely absorbed shot after shot from Ward while looking in vain for that one big punch that could alter his fate. After the eighth round, Ward trainer Virgil Hunter told his fighter, "You're breaking his heart."

Hunter also instructed Ward to be cautious in the final three rounds, and the Olympic champion never pressed for the stoppage. Judges Steve English (USA) and Marshall Walker (USA) scored it 119-109, while Marty Sammon (USA) saw it 116-112, all for Ward. THE RING's tally was 120-108, with every round going to Ward.



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Ward tallied his career best win against Miranda

With the win, Ward entered THE RING super middleweight rankings. "The cut was never a big factor," said Ward, whose next bout could come against beltholders Carl Froch or Karoly Balzsay. "I knew I had to keep my cool. Miranda is an awkward guy with long arms. I would have liked to have stopped him, but I did what I had to do, and that's the mark of a good fighter."

During the bout, the state commission confiscated a brown bottle from Miranda's corner that contained a sus-

picious substance. Miranda trainer Jose Bonilla claimed it was simply Vaseline. As of early-June, results of the commission's investigation had not been made public.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions**
(5-16-09)

Kevin Johnson KO 6 Devin Vargas

Atlantic City, New Jersey: There's a forgotten independent film called *The Disappearance Of Kevin Johnson*, a 1997 mockumentary about the vanishing of a fictitious British film producer. That title might have fit the real-life Johnson had he been unsuccessful in stepping up against Vargas, the captain of the 2004 U.S. Olympic squad. Instead, heavyweight prospect Johnson's spectacular display was more like *The Emergence Of Kevin Johnson*.

In the most explosive performance of his six-year career, Johnson, 246¼, floored Vargas, 225¾, twice before the bout at Harrah's Marina Hotel and Casino was stopped at 2:23 of the sixth. The win elevated the 29-year-old Johnson into the upper echelon of U.S. heavyweights, a maligned club that's never been more in need of new faces.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Johnson strides away as ref rescues Vargas

Vargas, 17-1 (7), took the fight on nine days' notice after former contender Monte Barrett withdrew due to a cut sustained in training. The 27-year-old Toledo, Ohio, native was the more aggressive fighter in the early going, while Johnson, 22-0-1 (9), patiently sat back, jabbed, and deflected Vargas' jabs. Vargas picked up the intensity in the second and third, when he began slamming home his powershots, though none seemed to hurt Johnson, who kept his focus on defense.

The mindset momentarily changed for the Atlanta, Georgia, resident late in the third. Johnson connected with five straight left hands and a right to the head of Vargas, who went down for the first time in his career. Vargas took a knee and beat New Jersey referee Earl Morton's count, but was bleeding from his nose at the bell.

Vargas was ready to go in the fourth but was complaining about an ear injury, and Johnson jabbed and clowned his way through the round. Johnson continued to proceed cautiously in the fifth, which Vargas began by trying to re-establish his jab. But Johnson finished the round by landing a pair of left hooks that dropped a spent Vargas for a second time. Vargas beat the count, and picked up a couple of extra seconds by losing his mouthpiece. Johnson finally went for the stoppage when action resumed, and he appeared on the verge of ending it at the bell.

Between rounds, Vargas complained to father/trainer Ray Vargas that he couldn't hear out of his right ear, the result of a perforated eardrum. He went out for the sixth anyway. Done fooling around, Johnson rocked Vargas throughout the round with powershots, knocking his opponent's mouthpiece out again at one point, before a flurry prompted Vargas' corner to throw in the towel.

It was a breakthrough win for the trash-talking "Kingpin," who turned pro in 2003 after only 16 amateur bouts. It was also the third straight stoppage for a fighter not previously known for his power, if he was known at all.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Star Boxing**
(5-15-09)

Vicente Escobedo KO 2 Kevin Kelley

Sacramento, California: Every good boxing prospect has faded ex-titlists on his resume, and nearly every fading ex-titlist lends his name to the resumes of a few good prospects before he's done. It's just the way the sport works. The Escobedo-Kelley match at Arco Arena was a fairly exaggerated example of this tradition, and the result was conclusive enough that, perhaps, Kelley will cease to play the role of aging punching bag any longer.

The two fighters couldn't have been headed in more different directions. At age 27, Escobedo was coming off a career-best win over another ex-beltholder, Carlos "Famoso" Hernandez, and was looking to win his 12th fight in a row. Former WBC featherweight titlist Kelley, 41, had lost three of his last five and hadn't been taken seriously as a contender in almost a decade.

Kelley, 135, Queens, New York, had one decent round in him. The southpaw looked to be in good shape and was competitive for the first three minutes of the fight.

But the bout quickly became non-competitive in the second round. Escobedo, 134½, Woodland, California, landed a hard counter right hand, and down went Kelley on all fours. "The Flushing Flash" beat the count of referee Jon Schorle (USA), but Escobedo attacked relentlessly in search of the kayo, and

a prolonged barrage finally sent Kelley, 60-10-2 (39), down again. Schorle didn't bother with a count, waving off the fight at 1:53 of the round.

"I felt really confident going in there," Escobedo, 21-1 (13), said afterward. "In the locker room, I was thinking the whole time I want to go in there and dictate the fight, that I am the one in charge."

As Escobedo inches closer to THE RING's top 10 lightweight rankings, hopefully the time has come for him to be matched against a credible fighter close to his own age. Hernandez and Kelley are good names to attach to his record, and Hernandez did give Escobedo a solid tussle, but now it's time for the 2004 Olympian to prove he can beat someone of note whose best days aren't all in the past.

Salita stayed unbeaten by outpointing Munoz

Promoter: **Don Chargin Productions**
(5-21-09)

Dmitriy Salita W 10 Raul Munoz

Primm, Nevada: Outside the ring, the undefeated Salita has been embroiled in a frustrating tussle with the WBA over when, as their number-one junior welterweight contender, he's going to receive a title shot. Inside the ring, the Brooklyn-based Ukrainian found the going much easier as he kept busy with a lopsided points win over journeyman Munoz at Buffalo Bill's Star Arena.

In one of two boxing matches on a part-boxing, part-mixed-martial-arts card, Salita, 146, boxed intelligently against the naturally bigger opponent, using his speed, combinations, and side-to-side movement to arguably win every round. Salita, 27, was aggressive without being reckless, and while Munoz, 148½, Topeka, Kansas, was game, he couldn't make his superior size and power a factor.

The 33-year-old Munoz' greatest success probably came in the opening round, when he landed a few jabs and right hands and caused a bit of swelling next to Salita's left eye. Salita, fighting for the first time in six months, focused his attack on the body in the second round and appeared to hurt Munoz on a couple of occasions. Munoz landed a nice left hook in the third, but all of his offense came in single shots, whereas Salita put his punches together and piled up points.

A warning from referee Jay Nady (USA) for low blows in the fourth slowed Salita's body attack. "I was worried the referee would take a point away," Salita admitted afterward. "He had warned me in the locker room." But a round later, Salita went back to banging the body, and at the end of the fifth, he rattled Munoz, 20-12-1 (15), with a right uppercut.

Salita grew more dominant from there, scoring with neck-snapping shots almost at will while Munoz' offense faded. A left hook in the eighth buckled the Kansan's knees, but Salita played it cautiously, continuing to score, but never opening himself up dangerously in pursuit of the knockout. You could argue that the result was mildly disappointing for Salita, since in each of Munoz' four most recent losses, he had been TKO'd.

At the end of 10, judges Dick Houck (USA) and Robert Hoyle (USA) both scored it a 100-90 shutout, while Jerry Roth (USA) had it 99-91, all for Salita, 30-0-1 (16).

Salita is hoping that he'll face the winner of Andreas Kotenlik-Amir Khan for the WBA belt next, but with the alphabet group recognizing Victor Ortiz-Marcos Maidana as a title eliminator, it was unclear as of press time whether Salita will be getting his wish. One thing is for certain: If "The Star Of David" fights any of those four opponents, it will be a huge step up over the sort of opposition he's taken on thus far.

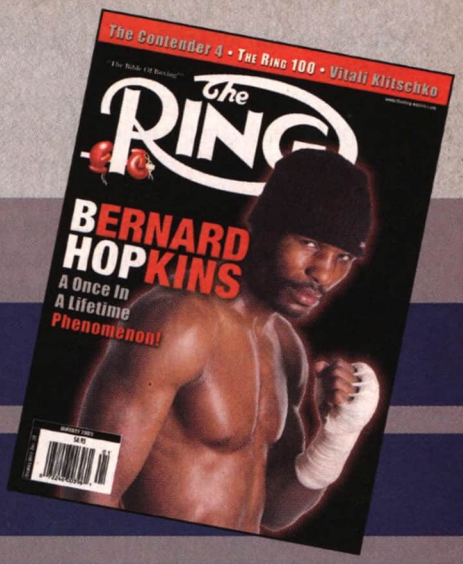
Promoter: **Square Ring**
(5-24-09)

Travis Kauffman KO 3 Livin Castillo

Reading, Pennsylvania: Castillo was billed as a step up in class for Kauffman, and for one round, he seemed to be schooling the 23-year-old heavyweight prospect. But a savvy adjustment led to an early night for Kauffman, who thrilled an estimated 2,000 hometown fans at the Sovereign Center with his seventh straight knockout inside of three rounds.

The southpaw Castillo, 210½, Quito, Ecuador, entered having dropped five of his last eight bouts, though each of his vanquishers were current contenders or former beltholders, including Eddie Chambers, Alexander Povetkin, Bruce Seldon, and Oleg Maskaev. Castillo, 14-7 (9), opened by bloodying the nose of Kauffman, 17-0 (14), with a few straight

The RING



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lefts. He moved forward, looked more aggressive, and landed the cleaner shots in the first round.

The 6'3" Kauffman, who weighed a career-low 220½, said his legs felt heavy in the initial three minutes, which made him a stationary target. So he decided to try switching to southpaw in the second round in hopes of generating some movement and nullifying the 5'11½" Castillo's left hand. It worked.

"When I went to southpaw, he couldn't hit me at all," Kauffman said. "All he has is a left hand. When I started doubling my (right) jab, he couldn't come over top of it at all."

A minute into the round, Kauffman connected with a left to the head along the ropes that swung the momentum of the fight. He battered Castillo for the rest of the round, but his rush to be the first man to stop Castillo before the third round caused him to head hunt too much, which helped the 33-year-old Castillo reach the bell.

Kauffman began going to the body late in the second, however, and continued targeting Castillo's midsection in the third until a right hook to the body put Castillo on one knee. Castillo easily beat the count, but then signaled *no mas* to referee Gary Rosado (USA), who waved it off at 1:26 of the round. Alfredo Marchio, Castillo's manager, said afterward that his fighter couldn't continue due to battered ribs.

"Today was a huge test," said Kauffman, who had been off for nearly four months due to injuries. "I knew I was going to pass it, and I knew I had to make my adjustments. If you can't make adjustments in a fight, you better not be fighting."

Promoter: **King's Promotions**
(5-30-09)
Don Stewart

Ivan Calderon Tech. Draw 6 Rodel Mayol

New York, New York: The showdown between Calderon and Mayol resembled two wind-up toys more content to butt heads than exchange punches for parts of the six rounds they fought at Madison Square Garden.

Calderon, 106¼, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, was making his fourth defense of THE RING's junior flyweight world championship. Mayol, 106, Mandaue City, Philippines, was making his first appearance in the ring in 10 months, after fighting three times in 2008.

It was an interesting contrast in styles. Calderon, 34, doesn't have much pop and can make anyone look bad. Mayol, 27, is a puncher who at 5'4" is four inches taller than Calderon, though both fighters were listed with 65-inch reaches. The twist was Calderon connected on more power-punches (50), while Mayol, thought to be the slugger, had a more active jab, connecting on 14 of 134.

Neither fighter did much of anything through the first three rounds, but Mayol, 25-3-1 (19), seemed slightly more active than Calderon, 32-0-1 (6). Both missed punches by gaping distances, as Mayol tried to engage and Calderon seemed content to run and feint.

Finally in the fourth, Calderon, possibly sensing that the fight was slipping from him, started to come alive, winning his first round on THE RING scorecard, effectively moving in and out of Mayol's punching range. The fifth is when the fireworks came. There was an accidental headbutt 25 seconds into the round, which opened a cut on Calderon's forehead. Blood began leaking down into Calderon's left eye when, 27 seconds later, the fighters clashed heads again. This seemed to wake up Calderon, who stepped up his assault, landing a straight right on the chin.

A third butt, ruled accidental, at the 1:50 mark of the sixth forced referee Benjy Esteves Jr. (USA) to summon Dr. Robert Polofsky, who saw enough bleeding to stop the fight. At the time the fight was stopped, judge Tony Paolillo (USA) had Calderon up, 58-56, judge Tom Schreck (USA) had it for Mayol, 58-56 (which is also what THE RING had), and judge Steve Weisfeld (USA) called it even, at 57-57.

"I came in slow," said Calderon, who retained THE RING world title. "I was starting to get more action in the fight. The fight was going the way I wanted, back and forth. I was getting hot and trading more punches. After the second butt, the referee saw a lot of blood and he told me that he was going to stop the fight. I told him that was his decision. Every time he came in he was coming in really fast and low."

Promoter: **Top Rank**
(5-13-09)
Joseph Santoliquito ■

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Calderon and Mayol butted heads for a technical draw

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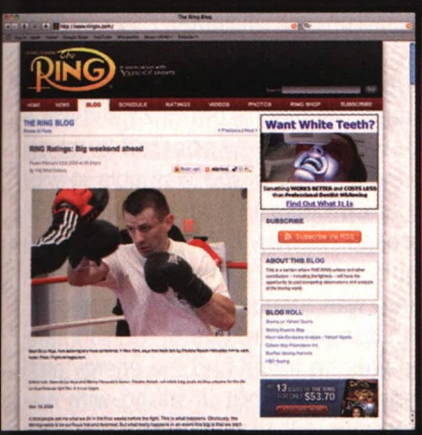

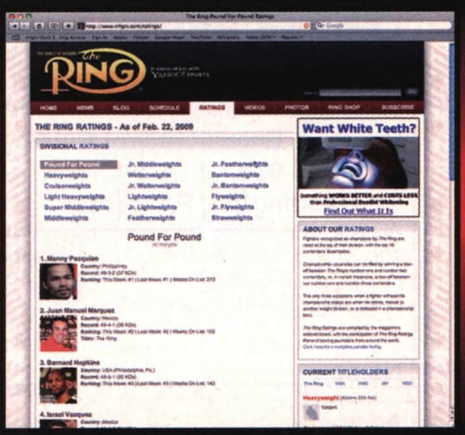

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[New Faces]

(Continued from Page 24)

the time. When I first went to university and I was fighting four-rounders I could get away with it. I think it's still important to have a healthy social life and to be able to switch off, but I don't want to jeopardize what I have, because I know I have the potential to go a long way in this business."

Warren believes that Cleverly will be part of the next wave of British boxing talent that includes Amir Khan, 2008 Olympians James DeGale and Bradley Saunders, and 2007 world amateur champion Frankie Gavin.

"He is a clever fighter who uses his brain in the ring and the power is coming as well now, which he demonstrated against Boyle," said Warren, who has guided Joe Calzaghe, Ricky Hatton, Naseem Hamed, and others to world title success. "Nathan is not a playboy. He lives properly and is very focused on his career. I feel he can be a big star. He just needs more experience."

Something of a tearaway in his youth—"I was a very competitive kid out of a rough neighborhood, so I had a lot of streetfights when I was 11 or 12 because I couldn't turn a fight down"—Cleverly engaged in only 36 amateur bouts (winning 32) before turning pro at 18. With Enzo Calzaghe in his corner, he developed solid boxing skills and benefited from sparring multiple rounds with former world light heavyweight and super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe.

"Joe's a local valley boy and an inspiration to someone like me. I learned so much from Enzo and Joe," Cleverly said. "I sparred a lot of rounds with Joe and was able to witness up close just how intense and focused he was in preparation for his fights and how motivated he was to win. I was around the Newbridge gym with Joe from the age of 13, so I saw the way he trains and the energy and dedication he put in along with his fantastic will to win. Unfortunately, because of the business of boxing we had to go our separate ways. My dad is training me now. He had no prior experience in boxing until I started in

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

In his only pro bout outside of the U.K. so far, Cleverly won every round on all three judges' scorecards to take an eight-round decision over Antonio Baker. Although not known as a big puncher, Cleverly has stopped his last three opponents.

the sport, but he's picked up a lot from different trainers and together we will go from strength to strength."

Despite being caught in the middle of the Calzaghes' acrimonious split with Warren, Cleverly has maintained his focus and unbeaten record. While still part of the Calzaghe stable, he secured a points victory over American journeyman Antonio Baker on the undercard of Calzaghe's win against Bernard Hopkins in April 2008 at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas. In his next fight, having elected to work out of his dad's gym in Bargoed, south Wales, he challenged English veteran Tony Oakey for the vacant Commonwealth light heavyweight title and claimed the judges' verdict after 12 hard-fought rounds in only his 13th bout.

"It was my first championship fight and my first 12-rounder and something of an achievement to beat a man of his pedigree at the age of 21," Cleverly declared. "For me, he was the best light heavyweight in Britain behind Clinton Woods [the former IBF titleholder] and, although it was tough, I won the fight clearly. I had to step up to the plate because I had never before gone further than eight rounds, and the fact that I was able to do this has given me a lot of confidence.

"Not that I ever had any doubts about my ability to compete in the championship rounds. At 15, I won the British schoolboys welterweight title and I also won the Welsh cross-country running title in the same year. As a 16-year-old, I was the best long-distance runner in Wales, so I have one of the best engines in British boxing. Chad Dawson is the best in the world in my division today, but I don't believe he's anything special, so my goal is to get into position to challenge him and to stay champion for a long time. With Joe's retirement, I'd like to help keep the light shining on Welsh boxing and I'm determined to do this over the next few years."

There is room for improvement, but the man who is not daunted by Newton, Pythagoras, or the legacy of Calzaghe may soon become a force, if his calculations prove to be correct. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

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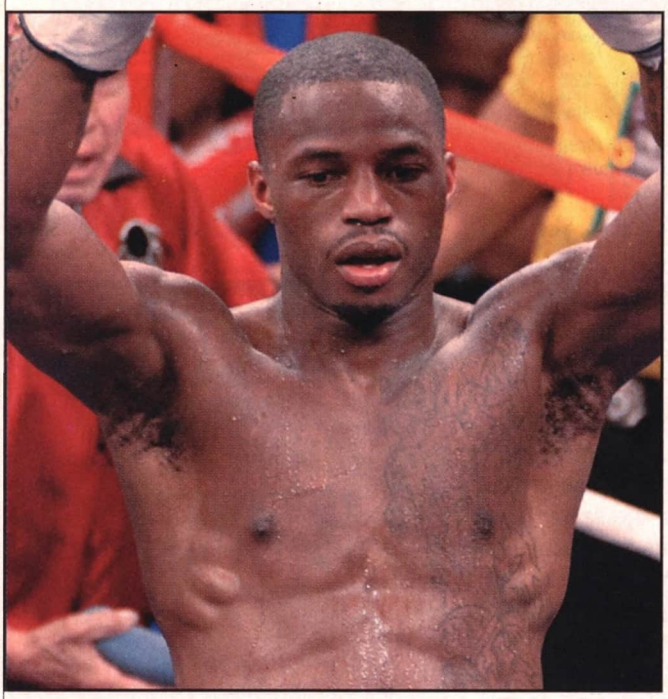


PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

For nearly a decade, the public's recognition of a light heavyweight champion followed a straight line. Roy Jones unified the three main alphabet belts and the lineage went directly to Antonio Tarver, then Glen Johnson, then Tarver again, then Bernard Hopkins, and then Joe Calzaghe. But with Calzaghe retiring as champion shortly after his win over Jones last November, that completed a circle of sorts. There is no light heavyweight champ anymore. There are only contenders. And when it comes to fights between contenders to set the stage for an eventual crowning of a new champion, Dawson vs. Johnson II is one of the most compelling and meaningful fights that can be made.

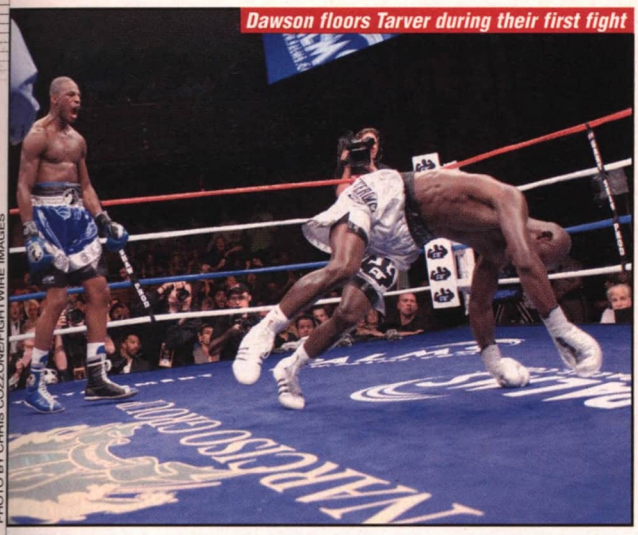
Hopkins is still rated number one by THE RING, so unless he suddenly retires, this fight won't be for THE RING belt. But the winner will establish himself as a necessary component of any future vacant RING title fight. And given Hopkins' relative inactivity, the winner might even establish himself immediately as the number-one fighter at 175 pounds.

When Dawson and Johnson met for the first time, in April 2008, the undefeated Dawson prevailed on all three judges' cards. It was an entertaining scrap that most fans felt could have gone either way. Johnson has pushed for a rematch ever since, and Dawson has now reached the point where granting his toughest opponent that rematch is the only fight that makes sense for him. So the fight is on. And when it's over, perhaps we'll be one step closer to crowning a new light heavyweight champion.

Chad Dawson

Glen Johnson

Record and World Rating



Dawson floors Tarver during their first fight

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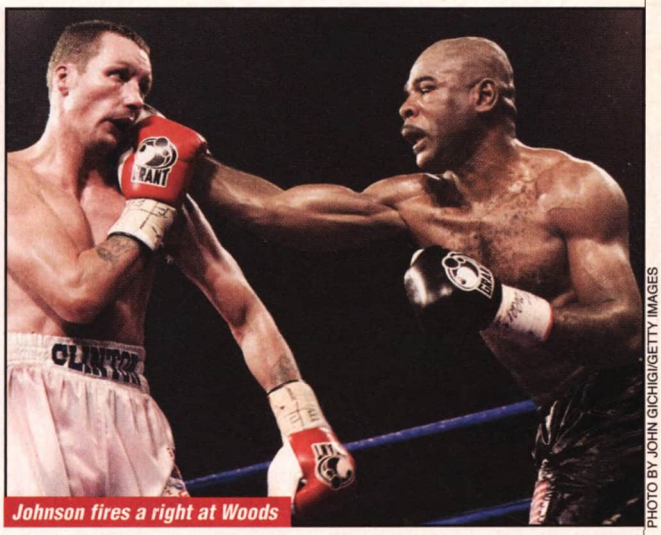


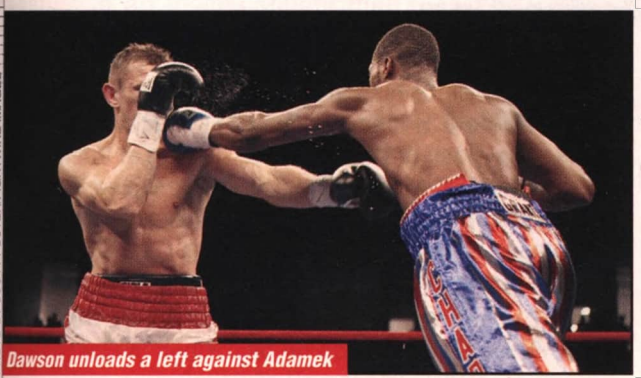
Johnson fires a right at Woods

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Is 28-0 with 17 knockouts and 1 no-contest ... Enjoyed a 58-13 amateur career that ended with a silver medal at the 2001 World Championships ... Turned pro in August '01 ... Won the WBC Youth middleweight title in October '03, NABO super middleweight title in November '05, and the NABF light heavyweight strap in June '06 ... Captured the WBC light heavyweight title in February '07, made three defenses, then was stripped of that belt but captured the IBF 175-pound title in October '08 and has made one defense ... Is ranked number two at light heavyweight by THE RING.

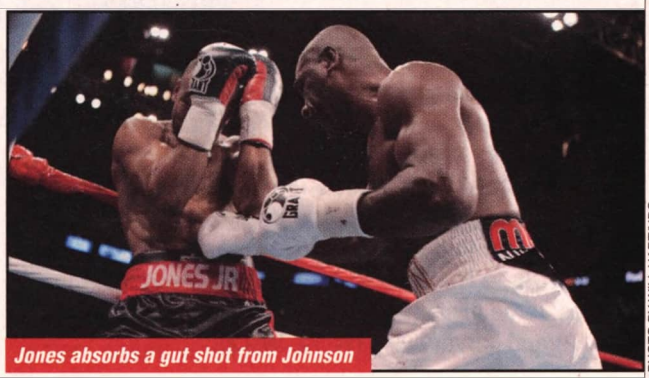
Is 49-12-2 with 33 knockouts ... Posted a 35-5 amateur record and turned pro in February 1993 ... Challenged unsuccessfully for the IBF middleweight title in July '97 and the IBF super middle title in November '99, and fought to a draw in first attempt at the IBF light heavy title in November '03 ... Won IBF 175-pound belt in February '04, made one defense, then won THE RING light heavyweight title in December '04 and was named Fighter of the Year ... Lost the RING title in June '05, then challenged unsuccessfully for the IBF light heavy title in September '06 and WBC title in April '08 ... Is ranked third at light heavyweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment



Dawson unloads a left against Adamek

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES



Jones absorbs a gut shot from Johnson

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Is 27 years old ... Stands 6'1" with a 76½-inch reach ... Claims to be able to still make 168 pounds if he had to ... Athletically gifted with good hand and foot speed ... A respectable puncher with both hands, but hardly a one-punch knockout artist ... Uncertainty surrounding chin; has been dropped but never severely hurt ... Always looks in great shape, but stamina mildly questionable due to some late fades.

Is 40 years old ... Stands 5'11" with a 75-inch reach ... Has held up freakishly well for his age ... Always in extraordinary condition, able to keep up a high punch output for all 12 rounds ... Not especially fast with his hands or feet ... Boasts one of the most reliable chins in boxing ... Decent puncher, but power isn't his forte ... Has toyed with the idea of moving up to cruiserweight, but still makes 175 comfortably.

Best Weapons

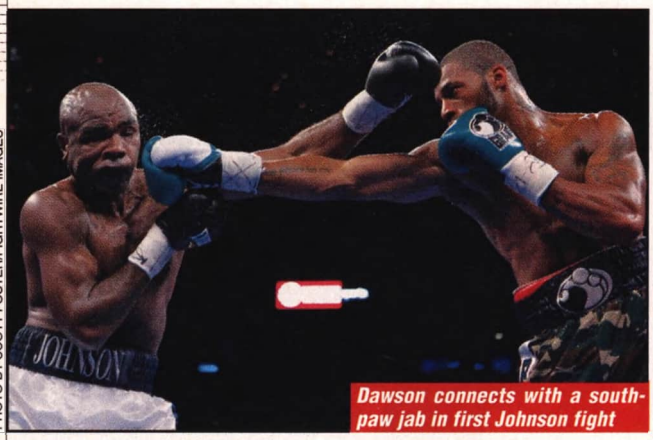
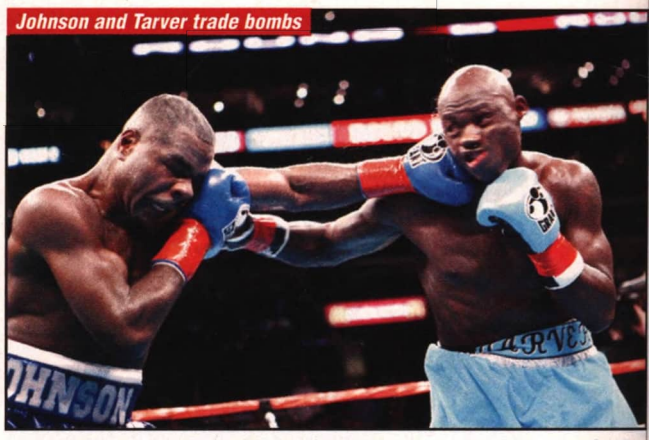


PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Dawson connects with a southpaw jab in first Johnson fight

Left cross thrown from southpaw stance has produced many knockdowns and can turn fights around ... Sets up left with long, accurate jab ... Speed, athleticism, and solid fundamentals a potent combination ... Puts punches together well.



Johnson and Tarver trade bombs

Relentless pressure smothers, frustrates, and eventually wears down most opponents ... Work rate is hard to match, and especially impressive given his age ... Bangs the body diligently and effectively ... Right hand can sometimes turn out the lights.

Previous Fight

For the second fight in a row, easily turned back aging Antonio Tarver via unanimous decision, though rematch, at Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, was perhaps a touch closer than first fight ... Tarver, who had never lost a rematch, was a bit more energetic than the first time, whereas "Bad Chad," with little to prove, seemed flat ... Younger man was still far too good, winning a forgettable fight by scores of 117-111 (twice) and 116-112.

In a rematch to a bogus draw from six years earlier, pounded Daniel Judah convincingly for a 10-round decision win at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Hollywood, Florida ... Dropped Judah with a right hand late in the first round and dominated the fight from there ... Tried for the knockout but couldn't get it, instead settling for a near-shutout win by scores of 99-89 and 99-90 (twice).

Quality of Opposition

Fought the typical cannon fodder on the way up, the biggest name being used-up ex-titlist Carl Daniels (KO 7) ... Stepped up against tricky fellow southpaw Ian Gardner (KO 11), then stepped up again to beat veteran Eric Harding (W 12) ... Looked most impressive against Tomasz Adamek (W 12), who later claimed the RING cruiserweight title ... Had a couple of soft title defenses against Jesus Ruiz (KO 6) and Epifanio Mendoza (KO 4), but last three fights have been legit tests against Johnson (W 12) and Tarver twice (W 12, W 12).

Has faced a who's who of the 160-175-pound range over the course of his career ... Only kayo loss came against Bernard Hopkins (KO by 11) ... Most decision losses were close or controversial, coming at the hands of such notables as Sven Ottke, Julio Gonzalez, Clinton Woods, Tarver, and Dawson ... Owns wins over the likes of Thomas Ulrich (KO 6), Eric Harding (W 12), Woods (W 12), Tarver (W 12), Richard Hall (W 12), Montell Griffin (KO 11), and in his crowning achievement, Roy Jones (KO 9).

Defense

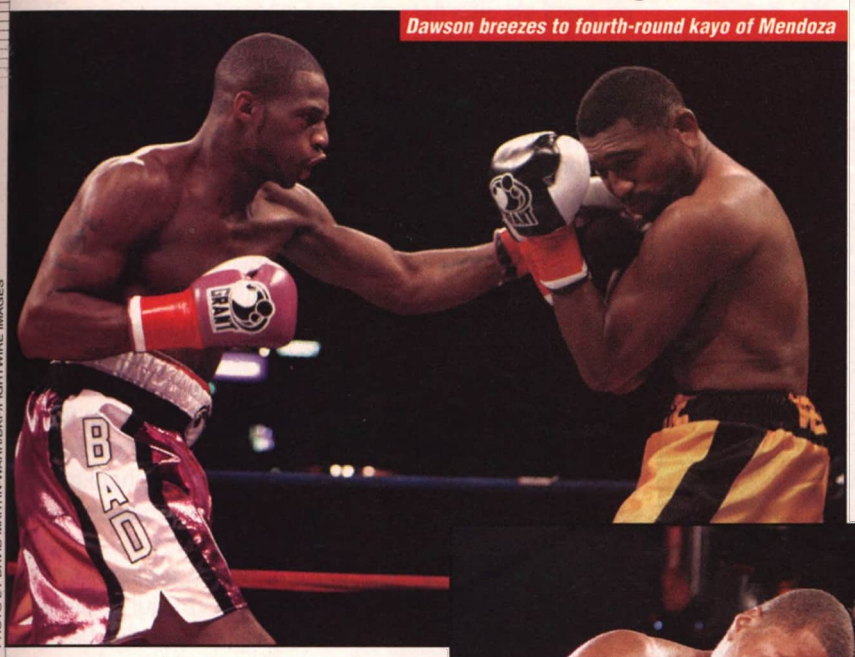
Has decent fundamentals but is prone to occasional lapses, which led to him getting rocked several times by Johnson and dropped by Harding and Adamek ... Sometimes carries his hands low, but has the athleticism to get away with it against most opponents ... Controls distance well, but doesn't move his head enough.

Underrated defensively because it looks like he's willing to take shots and doesn't move out of range much, but he's actually blocking lots of punches and avoiding getting hit flush ... When he does get drilled, solid chin generally bails him out ... Non-stop offense acts to discourage opponents from punching at times.

Chad Dawson

Glen Johnson

Style



Dawson breezes to fourth-round kayo of Mendoza

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DKP/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Is ultimately more boxer than puncher, using his length, speed, and southpaw stance to pile up points without spending too much time in the line of fire ... Can slug when he has to, and didn't back down in first fight against Johnson even when struggling on the inside ... Has the versatility to change his style from moment to moment, but that also results in an inconsistency that sometimes costs him rounds.

A classic pressure fighter who grows stronger as the fight wears on ... Can box and be sneaky and subtle when he wants to, but prefers the straight-forward approach ... Cuts off the ring well and doesn't mind falling behind on points because of confidence that he'll wear opponents down eventually ... The Jones fight notwithstanding, not much of a finisher.

Johnson clocks Hugo Pineda with a right

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The Questions

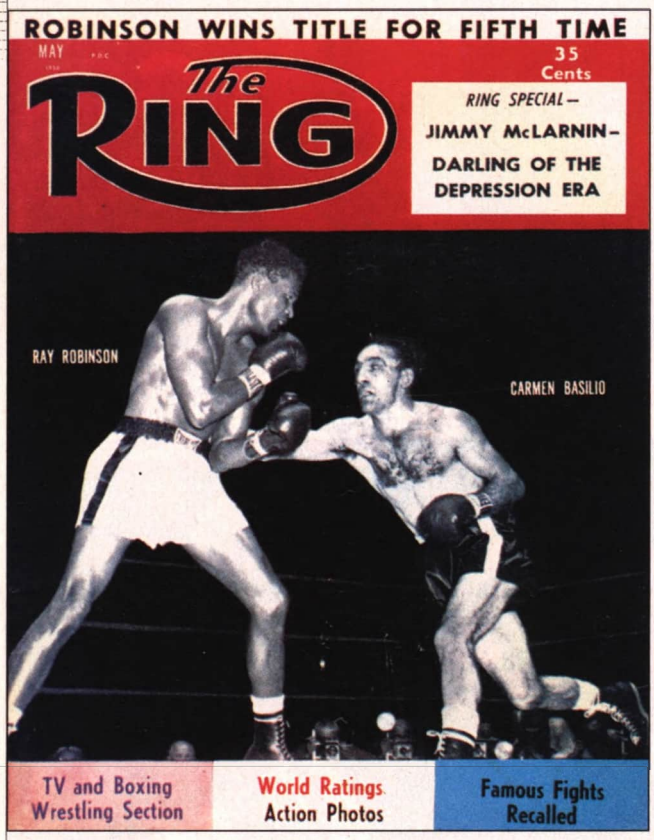
Did he really want to fight Johnson again? Will questions about the decision in the first fight motivate him? Can trainer Eddie Mustafa Muhammad game plan ways to thwart Johnson's pressure and let Dawson wage a more tactical fight? Can he possibly win spectacularly enough to get a fight with Bernard Hopkins?

Might he start to show his age in this fight? Will it be harder this time to lure Dawson into an action-packed fight now that Dawson has been through that with him once? Will he feel any pressure to deliver since so many fans and writers championed his cause for this rematch? Can he buck his career-long trend and win a close decision?

The Outcome

Dawson uses his legs and his speed to build an early lead, but the urge to silence his critics eventually gets the better of him, and by the mid-rounds, it's another slugfest. The fight is too close to call after 10 rounds, but Johnson surprisingly tires a bit and suffers a late flash knockdown, allowing the younger man to pull out another close decision that nearly everyone agrees went to the right fighter.

May 1958



COVER STORY: "Robinson Wins Title For Fifth Time" is Nat Fleischer's coverage of the March 28 rematch between Ray Robinson and Carmen Basilio in which "Sugar Ray" regained the middleweight title in a bout that was eventually selected as THE RING's Fight of the Year.

"The newly crowned king, a man of extreme pride, had his craggy-faced opponent's left eye in a pitiful state at the end of the bout," wrote Fleischer. "The contest between the masterful boxer, one of the greatest of all-time, and the plodding, aggressive, tear-in battler from Chittenango, New York, was not as spectacular an affair as their initial encounter, but will take its place in ring history with the great middleweight bouts of the past."

As he had lost the 160-pound title in their first contest (1957's Fight of the Year), Robinson knew he couldn't afford to slug it out with Basilio again if he was going to win back the crown.

"Ray had planned a different type of battle from his last one and he carried the plan into execution to perfection," explained Fleischer. "He boxed beautifully, hooked only when he saw a good opening, and rode to victory mostly on stinging jabs."

Fleischer also speculated that both the winner and the loser would retire—Basilio due to the eye injury suffered in the fight, and Robinson because, without Basilio, he would not be able to find a challenger "who can draw the kind of gate he's accustomed to."

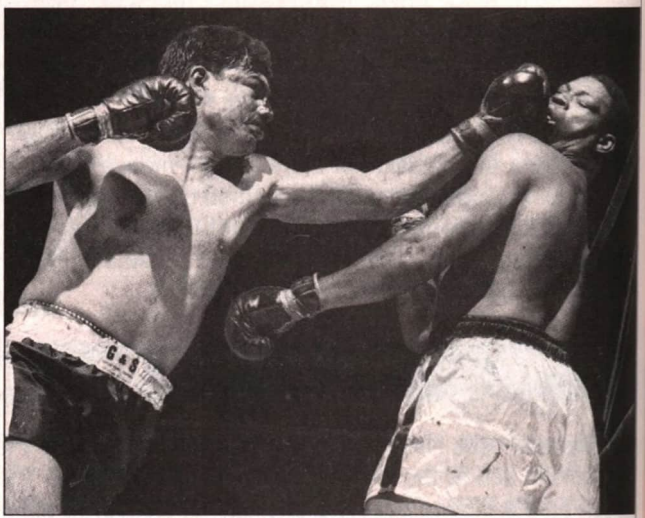
Of course, both men fought on, Basilio until 1961 and Sugar Ray until '65.

World Champions

(for the period ended December 30, 1957)
Heavyweight: Floyd Patterson
Light Heavyweight: Archie Moore
Middleweight: Carmen Basilio
Welterweight: vacant
Lightweight: Joe Brown
Featherweight: Hogan Bassey
Bantamweight: Alphonse Halimi
Flyweight: Pascual Perez

"Desperation Fighters" by Al Buck is a theme piece about how "the guys who never stop trying, even in the face of defeat, are often the most dangerous." The article was prompted by the recent heavyweight bout between Alex Miteff and Nino Valdes in which Miteff, "stung and bleeding profusely, surged to victory."

Buck recalled similar incidents, including Jim Braddock's final bout, against Tommy Farr, when the ex-heavyweight



Bloody Miteff rallies late to edge Valdes

champ rallied down the stretch to win a decision.

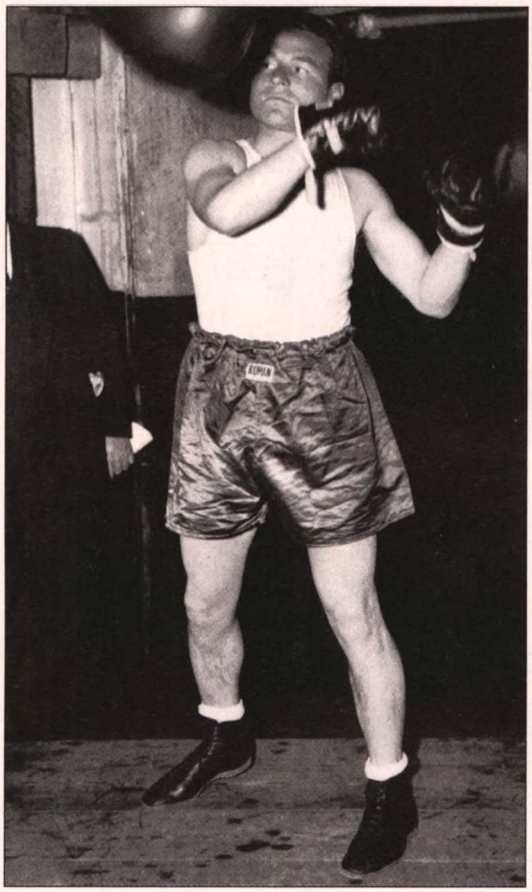
Among the other back-from-the-brink performances Buck discussed was the rematch between Ray Robinson and Randy Turpin.

"Sugar Ray was badly cut over the left eye. He knew he could not go much further, perhaps another round. So he turned it on. Robinson went all-out, never stopped punching, and had Turpin covering up, his back to the ropes, and out on his feet" to win by a 10th-round TKO.

"McLarnin: Depression Time Hero" is Ted Carroll's look back at former welterweight champion Jimmy McLarnin, who retired in 1936. Carroll used an offhand remark by McLarnin ("In my day, you could keep what you made. Today the tax collector gets most of it.") as a way to discus both McLarnin's career and how television and taxes had affected fighters' purse structures.

"Although wages were low and times were hard during the Great Depression of the 1920s and '30s, ring heroes of those hungry days did quite well, and as a consistent capacity-crowd attraction, McLarnin rated at the very top," wrote Carroll.

After a lengthy list of all the huge gates McLarnin drew during his Hall of Fame career, Carroll summed up his main point by writing, "It is a strange inconsistency that this ring hero of a generation ago would probably not have fared as well financially in these days of high taxes, high prosperity, and television as he did in the days of the Great Depression."



Depression Era ticket-seller McLarnin

"In Sunny California" by Bill Miller features a report on Archie Moore's 10th-round knockout of heavyweight Bert Whitehurst in a non-title bout held at the Swing Auditorium in San Bernardino:

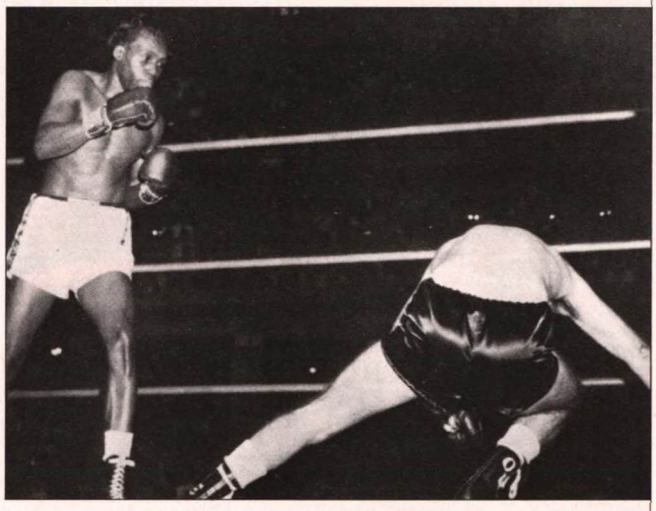
"He is the light heavyweight champion of the world, but weighed a hefty 196½ for his 10-round fight with Whitehurst," wrote Miller. "The additional 21½ pounds didn't do Archie any good, insofar as speed is concerned. But it didn't stop him from registering a 10th-round knockout."

"European Gossip" by Charlie Parish includes a report from Gothenburg, Sweden, about future heavyweight champion Ingemar Johansson's 13th-round kayo of Wales' Joe Erskine in defense of the European heavyweight title: "Johansson hammered Erskine from one corner of the ring to the other without much interference from his opponent, and the only wonder is that the Cardiff fighter kept on his feet so long," wrote Parish.

"New Of The British Isles" by Johnny Sharpe also features a future word champion who was still battling for regional honors:

"Dick Tiger, the Nigerian middleweight, won a shot at Pat McAteer for the latter's Empire title by stopping Jimmy Lynas in the seventh round" of a bout held in Manchester. "The Irish-born Lynas forgot all about his boxing by trying to outslug the hard-hitting Nigerian, who revels in a fight, especially when the opponent is willing to meet him halfway."

"News From Cuba" by Jorge Vietes features the opening of a new state-of-the-art venue in Havana. In the main event, world lightweight champion Joe Brown scored a clean first-round kayo of Cuban lightweight titleholder Orlando Echevarria in a non-title bout. The most fascinating part of the report, however, is the list of celebrities on hand for the opening of the Sports Palace: New York boxing commissioner Julius Helfand, promoter Jim Norris, THE RING's Nat Fleischer (along with Nat and Joan Loubet), world champion racecar driver Juan Manuel Fangio, actors Gene Autry and Jack Palance, singer Vic Damone, and boxers Joe Louis, Kid Gavilan, and Carmen Basilio. ■



Brown bombs out Echevarria in Havana arena opening

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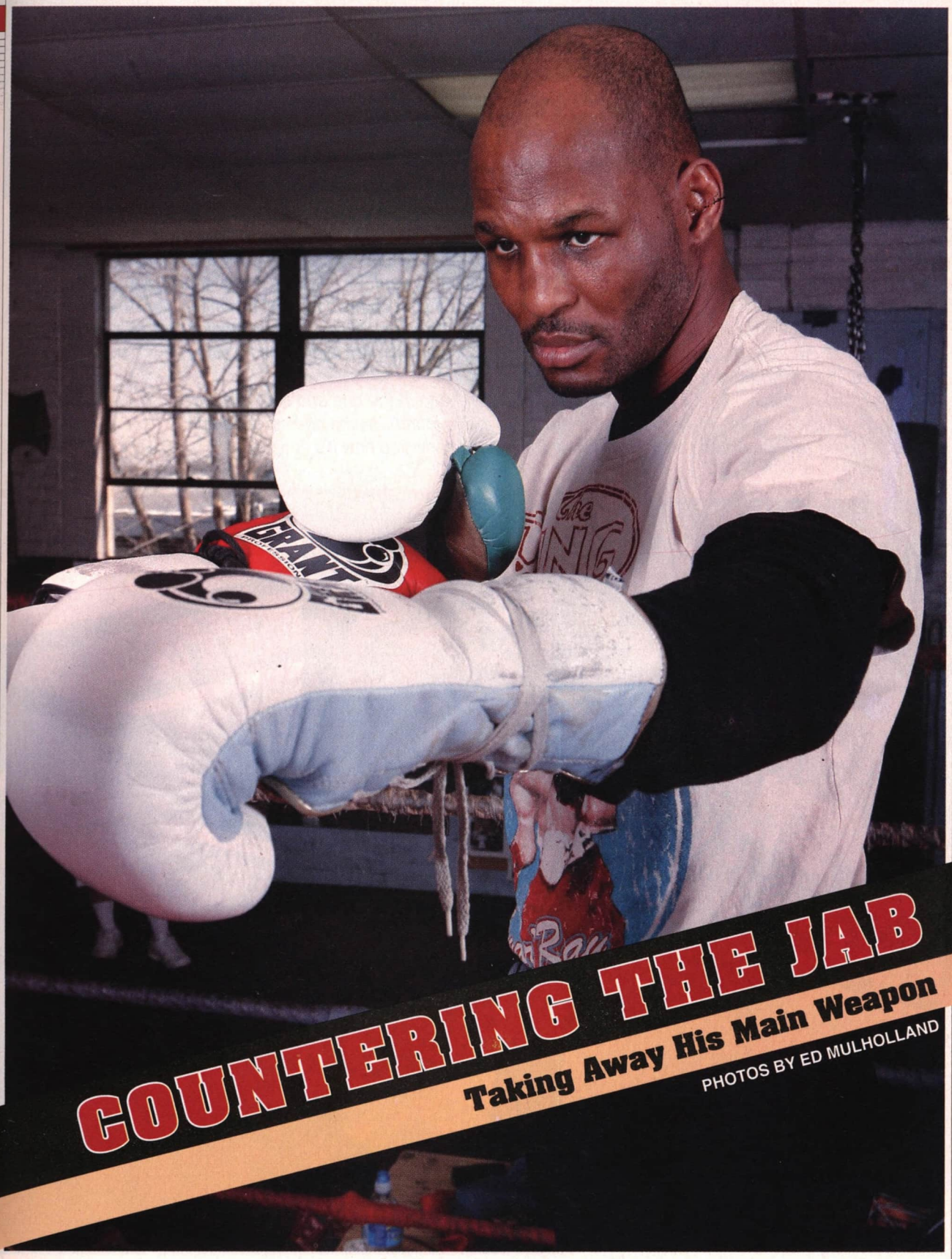
Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



COUNTERING THE JAB

Taking Away His Main Weapon

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

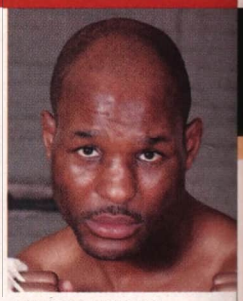
You've heard a lot of times now that the jab is the most important punch in boxing. It's the one that comes first and sets the table for everything that comes after it, it sets distance, blinds your opponent, sets up the right hand, etc. But it's not only your most important punch, it's your opponent's too, and if he's got a good one and can land it on you consistently, you're in trouble for the same reasons he'd be in trouble if yours was landing.

Your job is to make him stop throwing that punch, to take that jab away from him. How do you do that? Not just by making him miss it. By making him miss it and making him pay. You hurt him when he throws it and he won't be so eager to throw it next time. Or he waits.

If you can make him hesitant to throw it, or stop throwing it altogether, you've got him. You've taken away his main weapon. Now he can't set anything up and you can see everything. He can't surprise you. It's common sense: If every time he does something he gets hit back hard, what's he going to do? He's going to stop doing it. And that's just what you want.

Every time a boxer throws a punch he creates an opening, a spot on his body that's vulnerable. That includes when he jabs. Your job is to be looking for the clues he gives that he's going to jab. Does he drop his left hand first? Does he look down? Does he throw it every time he steps to the left or moves his head to the right?

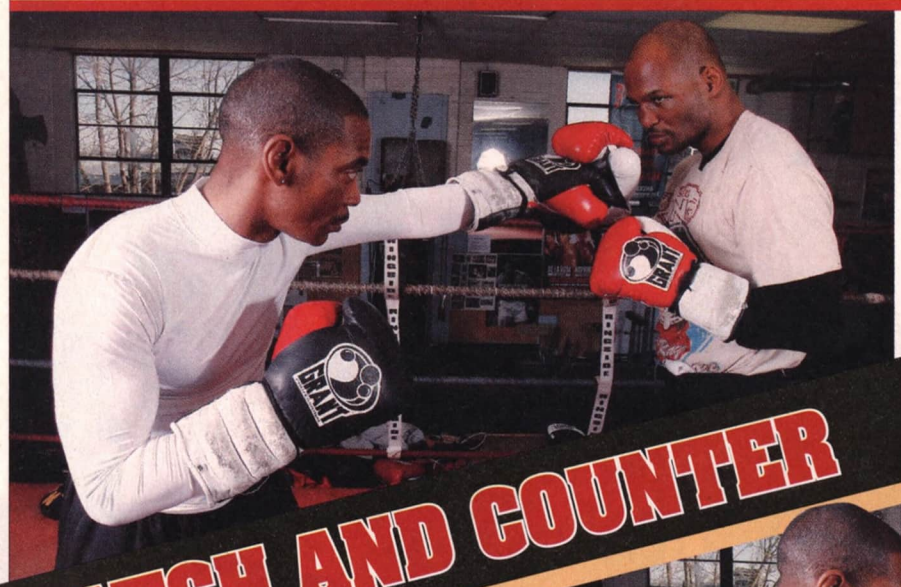
You pick up on these things if you're smart and use your head in the ring and stay relaxed. Remember, you're always looking for weaknesses. Once you've found what he does to telegraph his jab, you can anticipate it and counter it. Danny Davis and I show you how it's done.

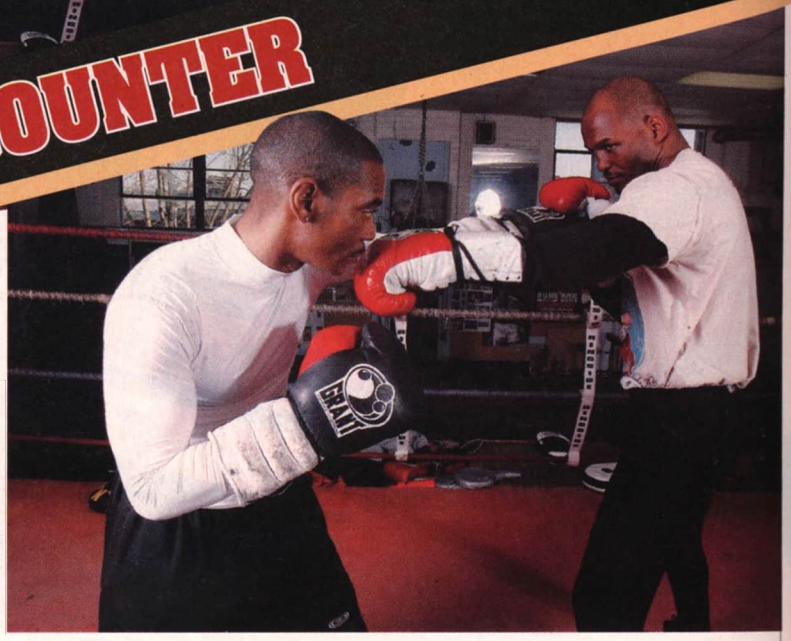


BERNARD HOPKINS *Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.*

(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)

CATCH AND COUNTER

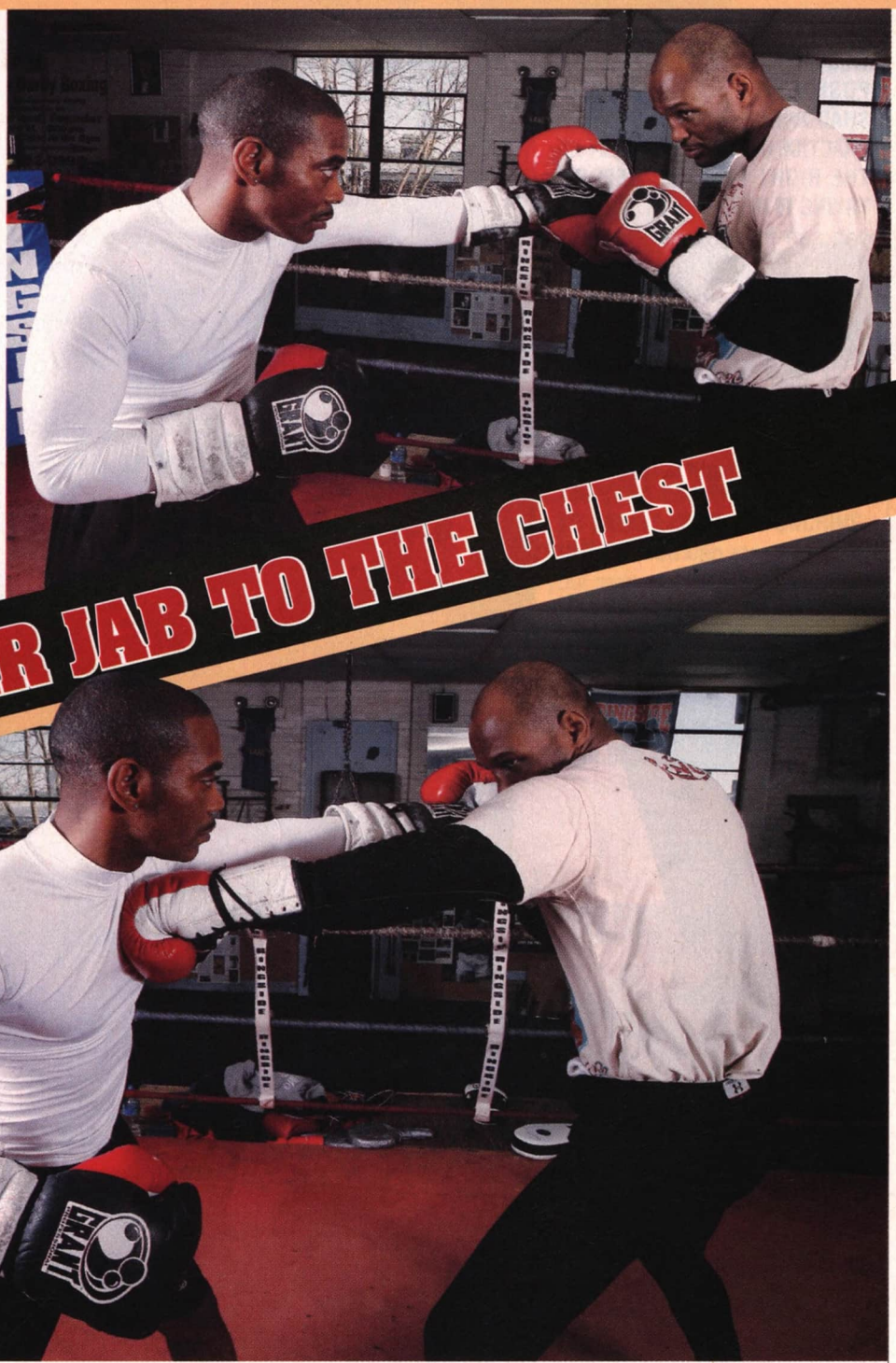




THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST BASIC COUNTERS TO THE JAB. It's simple. You let the jab come in and catch it in the palm of your right glove. Then you step in with your own hard, straight jab to the chin. And don't lose your form. The right hand stays up and the jab goes straight out and straight back.

THE WRONG WAY: DON'T REACH FOR THE JAB

ONCE YOU'VE CAUGHT AND COUNTERED THE JAB A FEW TIMES, YOU'LL START TO LOOK FOR IT, AND WILL BE TEMPTED TO REACH OUT TOO FAR TO CATCH IT, LIKE I'M DOING HERE. Don't do it. Your opponent will feint with the jab to get you to reach out, then counter you. Wait for the punch to come to you.

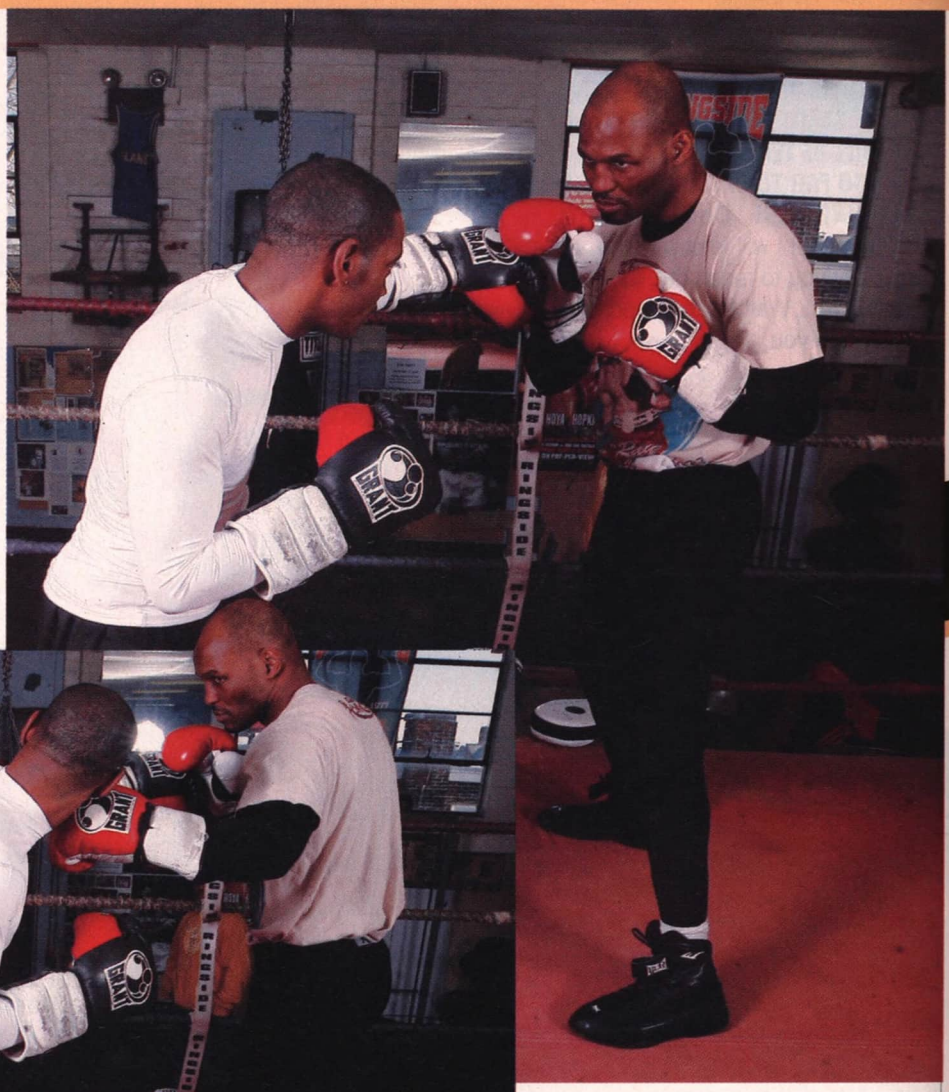


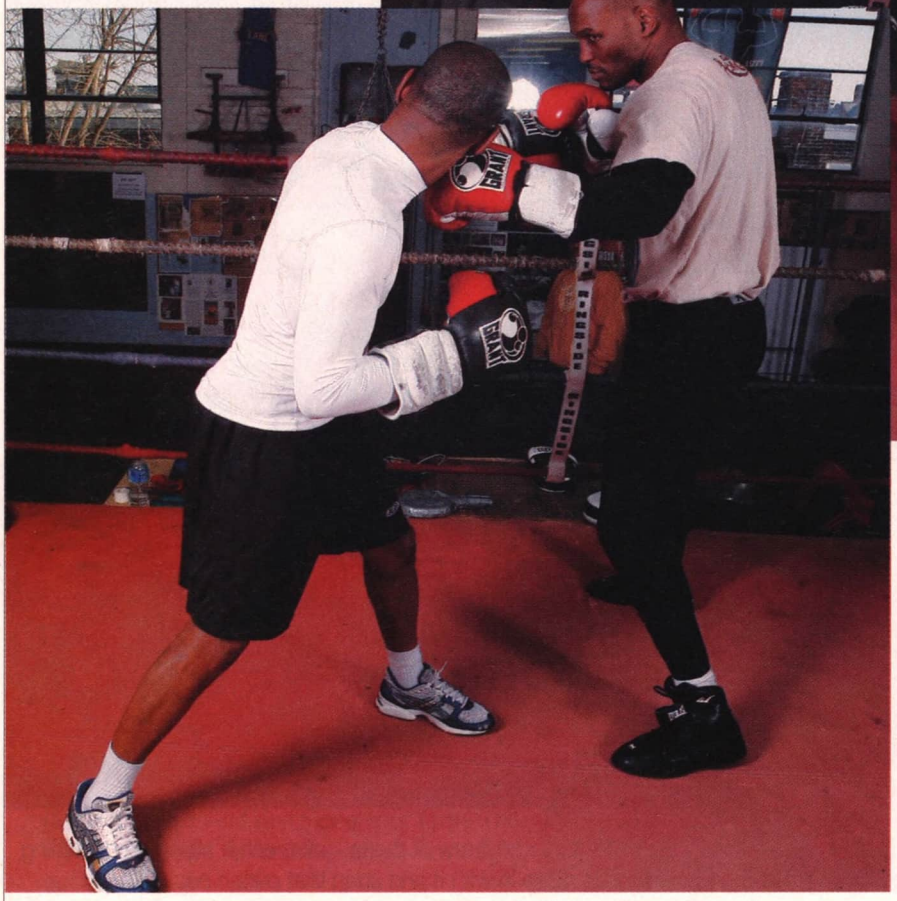
COUNTER JAB TO THE CHEST

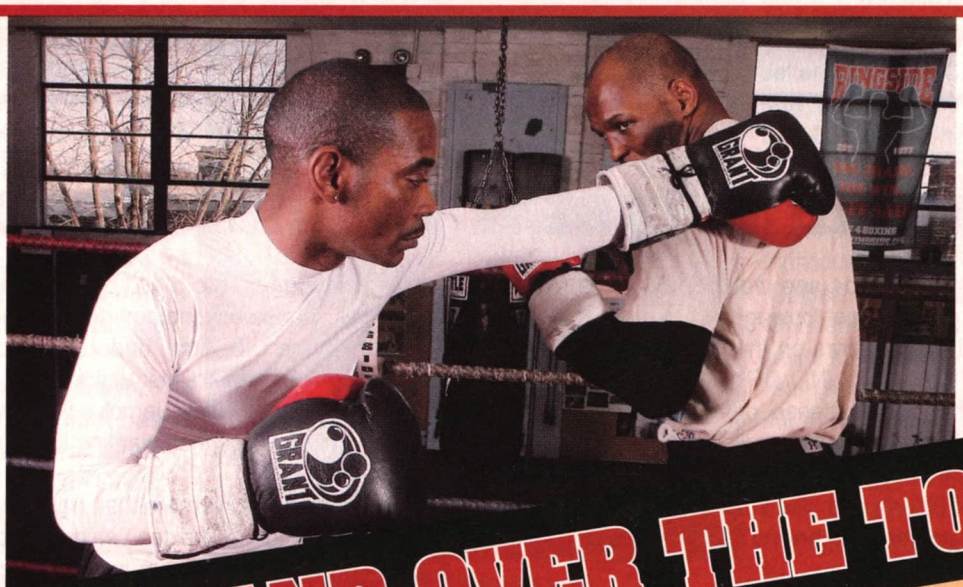
YOU EVER BEEN HIT HARD ON THE CHEST? If so, you know how much it hurts. Land a few of these—after either slipping or catching your opponent's jab—and he'll think twice about throwing the jab again. Step in with it and snap that punch out hard.

CATCH AND HOOK

THIS ONE REQUIRES A LITTLE REPOSITIONING, SO WHEN YOU SHADOWBOX, MAKE SURE YOU PRACTICE GETTING YOUR FEET IN THE RIGHT POSITION BEFORE TRYING IT IN SPARRING. As you can see from this image, I'm more squared up than usual as I catch the jab; I'm over a little to Danny's right. That's because I want to turn that left hook over right after I catch the jab. It's called getting position and using angles. I land a hook like this and the fight might be over.

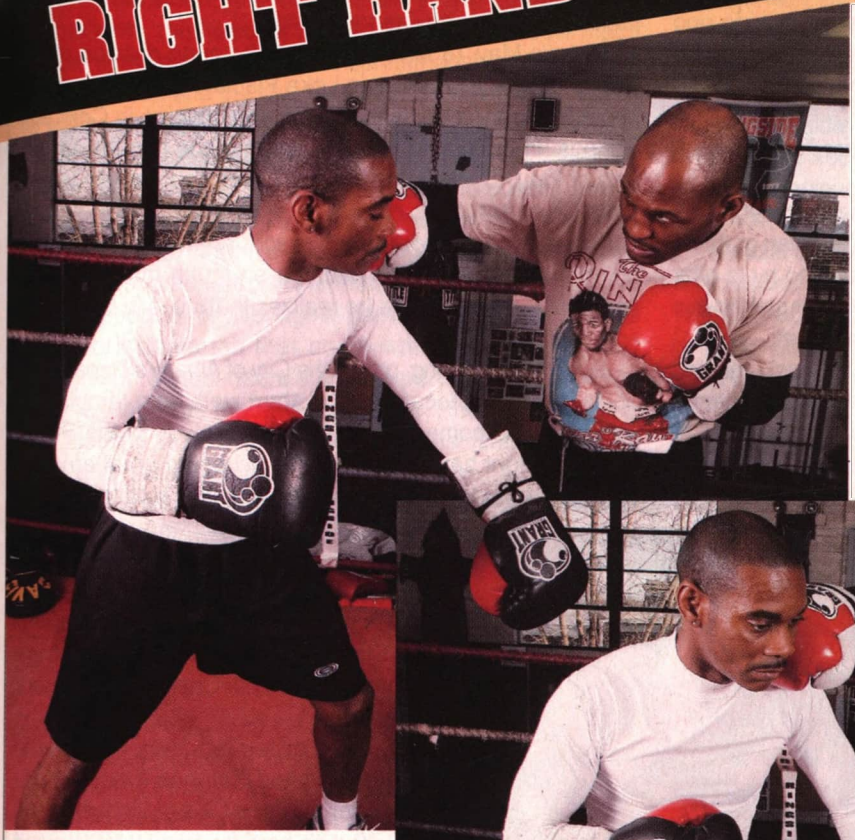


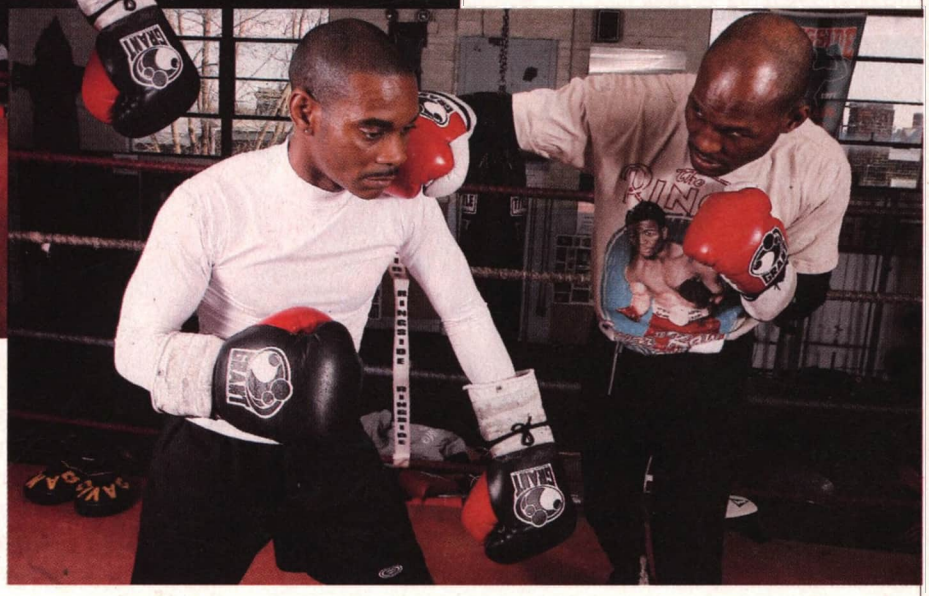




RIGHT HAND OVER THE TOP

THIS IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF USING ANGLES TO CREATE COUNTERPUNCHING OPPORTUNITIES. You can stand right in front of your man, slip the jab, and come over the top with the right hand. That's fine. Or you can take a little step to the right, let the jab go over your shoulder, and come across with the right hand. He can't defend it, and it puts you in position to come right back with your left hook.





By Michael Rivest
PHOTOS BY JEFF FOLEY

More Than Just A Boxing Coach

The first thing kids see walking into Albany, New York's Quail Street Boxing Gym are the rules, displayed in big letters on the wall above the sign-in sheet: NO PROFANITY, NO DRUGS, NO INSUBORDINATION. In short, no nonsense, period.

The next thing they'll likely see is Jerrick Jones, the gentle giant who enforces those rules. In return, Jones teaches them the art of boxing and, like so many amateur coaches throughout the country, use boxing's broader lessons to help turn lives around.

"We mean what we say about the rules," said Jones, "but we also know these kids need help. They may not know what a metaphor is, but their lives are a boxing ring filled with struggle and trouble. So getting control comes down to the same things: discipline, respect, and dealing with things like fear and defeat.

"What they learn in here works out there," Jones said, pointing to the street outside.

No sooner did Jones say this than he turned to greet a man who'd been patiently awaiting his attention. The man grabbed Jones' hand with both of his, saying he'd stopped by to offer thanks for the time he'd been giving his son and for making him feel so accepted. The sincerity in his voice said it all.

Jones learned about boxing from Matt Baranski, boxing legend Cus D'Amato's best friend and Mike Tyson's cutman throughout most of the fighter's career. Jones went on to fight 38 amateur bouts under Baranski before turning to training amateurs in 1986.

"Matt was the first to teach me how to work with kids," said Jones, whose psychology degree and two years as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army undoubtedly provided a sound foundation for Baranski's instruction.

"When it comes to kids, Jerrick's the best," said Baranski. "He knows how to use their wanting to learn about boxing to his advantage."

"Jerry's interested in more than training boxers, he wants to help us make good choices," said 18-year-old Amir Imam, a Jones protégé since Imam was 11 years old. Imam has grown both in boxing and in life under Jones' tutelage, and he's about to make his second consecutive trip to a major national amateur boxing tournament.

Imam's May 18 victory in the 132-pound division at the Regional Championships in Lake Placid, New York, earned him a trip to the U.S. National Championships in Colorado Springs. In the previous week, Imam made it to the semifinals of the U.S. National Golden Gloves Tournament in Salt Lake City, Utah.

"I can see how boxing has taught Amir discipline," said his mom, Sharon. "He's become so much more focused about everything. It's like he realizes that life is in his control and up to him."

Quail Street Boxing, part of the City of Albany's Department of Recreation, is located just a short walk from temptation. The kids who come and commit themselves to the Sweet Science might have just as easily accepted an alternative offer from groups not so concerned with their welfare. Gangs are a part of Albany's cultural landscape like anywhere else and hold an allure that is not easily countered.

Jones oversees sparring session at the Quail Street Gym

"Kids need to be a part of something larger than themselves," said Jones. "Gangs offer that, same as us. Obviously, our way's the better one."

"The effect of Jerrick's work is felt in the community," noted Stephon Frost, homeschool coordinator at Albany's Arbor Hill School. "But it's hard for many folks to admit that a boxing program can actually help, because they're still stuck in the stereotype that boxing means teaching violence. It isn't so. Boxing, properly done, the way Jerrick teaches it, is an art.

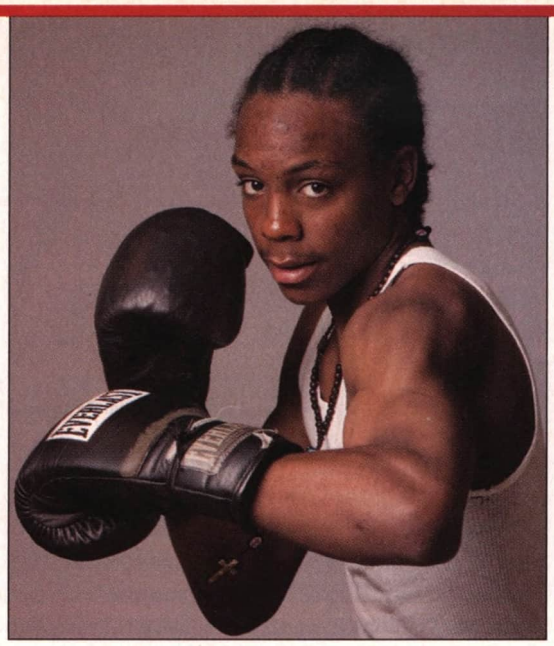
"Many teachers in Albany schools rely on Jerrick and the Quail Street Boxing for kids

we feel would benefit from the structure and discipline boxing demands. Jerrick's work is not about 'channeling violent tendencies,'" something Frost noted is another sad stereotype boxing has to endure. "It's about teaching kids respect, for themselves and for others."

Downtown Albany, New York, is a better place because of Jerrick Jones and the amateur program at Quail Street Boxing.

One Of Jerrick's Gems

It's not like Amir Imam hasn't enjoyed boxing success already. He's a National Junior Olympic Champion and, at 15, won the 2006 National Silver Gloves competition.



Hard work is paying off for 18-year-old Imam

But now that he is 18 and in the Senior Division, Imam is starting to really hit his stride, making his mark in two 2009 national tournaments, the National Golden Gloves, where he made it to the semifinals and won the sportsmanship award in his weight division, and the U.S. National Championships, where he will be competing shortly after this issue goes to press.

Ironically, boxing wasn't Imam's first choice in sports.

"He was too small for football," said his coach, Jerrick Jones. But boxing's many weight divisions meant size no longer mattered. Imam's superior athleticism and tireless work ethic scored (pardon the metaphor) a touchdown.

In addition to his five-nights-per-week workouts and the homework demands that come with being a senior at Albany High School, there's Imam's part-time job. Until too many boxing trips made it impossible, Imam worked at a local clothing store. After training, he'd just load his bike on a bus and head to work.

"I like the way boxing has given him an outlet for his ability and competitiveness," said Sharon, his mom.

Sharon enjoys seeing her son getting national recognition, but her real joy doesn't depend on any outside achievements, now or in the future. "I'm just very, very proud of him right now."

Tournament Results

The 2009 National Golden Gloves Tournament took place, May 4 through May 9 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Below are the results of the finals:

•106: Miguel Cartagena (PA) W 3 Adam Rangel (NV)
•112: Louis Byrd (CO/NM) W 3 Michael Ruiz (CA)
•119: Jesus Magdaleno (NV) W 3 John Franklin, (CO-NM)
•125: Robert Rodriquez (CO/NM) W 3 Toka Kahn (New England)
•132: Erick Deleon (Detroit) W 3 Shemuel Pagan, (NY Metro)
•141: Jose Benavidez (NV) W 3 Jamal James (Upper Midwest)
•152: Errol Spence (TX) Javontae Starks (Upper Midwest)
•165: Naim Terbunja (NY Metro) W 3 Luis Arias (WI)
•178: Dorian Anthony (CA) W 3 Jeffery Spencer (CO/NM)
•201: Jordan Shimmell (MI) W 3 Lamar Fenner (Chicago)
•202+: Lenroy Thompson (Kansas City) W 3 Bryant Jennings (PA)

National Golden Glove Individual Awards:
•Golden Boy Award: Louis Byrd
•Bill Daniels Award: Jesus Magdaleno

Team Awards:
•First: Nevada
•Second: Colorado/New Mexico
•Third: Texas

The 2009 AIBA World Junior Championships took place in Yerevan, Armenia, May 23 through May 30. The results of the finals:

•101: Koryun Soghomonyan (Armenia) W 3 Sandeep Singh (India)
•105: Theo Krechlok (Germany) W 3 Bagdat Uaidayev (Kazakhstan)
•110: Sergey Sobylinski (Russia) W 3 Talgat Bertleuov (Kazakhstan)
•114: Ivan Baranchyk (Belarus) W 3 Yerbolat Seidalliyev (Kazakhstan)
•119: Valdes Boleri (Cuba) W 3 Jonik Tonoyan (Armenia)
•125: Arlen Lopez Cardoso (Cuba) W 3 Aleko Chadashvili (Georgia)
•132: Oleh Neklyudov (Ukraine) W 3 Ricardas Kuncaitis (Lithuana)
•139) M. Abdulamagomedov (Armenia) TKO 3 S. Rodriguez Ordaz (Cuba)
•145: Andrey Egorov (Russia) W 3 Aharono Dan (Israel)
•154: Joseph Ward (Ireland) TKO 3 Hayk Khachatryan (Armenia)
•176: Mirzobek Hasanov (Uzbekistan) W 3 Italo Perea Castillo (Ecuador)
•176+: Gasan Gimbatov (Russia) TKO 3 Victor Ialimov (Moldova)

USA's Semajay Thomas made it all the way to the quarterfinals, where he was decisioned by Volodya Hayrapetyan (Armenia) ■

Coming Events

August 4-8: Ringside World Championships, KCI Expo Center, Kansas City, Missouri

September 1-12: AIBA World Boxing Championships, Milan, Italy.

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Knockout Or TKO: Which Is More Dangerous?

Former WBC featherweight titleholder Barry McGuigan understands boxing risks. After witnessing Ricky Hatton's technical knockout loss to Floyd Mayweather in 2007 and his devastating second-round knockout at the hands of Manny Pacquiao in May 2009, McGuigan made a recommendation to Ricky Hatton:

"A great career is over. Or at least it should be," wrote McGuigan in the May 3 edition of mirror.co.uk/sport.com. "Mercifully, Ricky Hatton did not sustain a prolonged beating."

McGuigan couldn't be more correct in understanding Hatton's risk. At age 29, Barry got out of the sport before it was too late and now has an established career as a writer and commentator. Although he fought only 198 rounds in eight years while amassing a professional record of 32-3 (28), he wisely hung up his gloves in 1989 after suffering a fourth-round TKO (on cuts) to Jim McDonnell.

If anything makes a ringside physician cringe it is a fighter absorbing countless headshots and coming back for more. This is irrespective of whether or not the bout is competitive. And although gasping fans stand on their tiptoes to catch a glimpse of a kayoed athlete, medical professionals know that the boxer is finally out of harm's way.

Contrast Hatton's knockout with Meldrick Taylor's 1990 technical knockout loss to Julio Cesar Chavez. Taylor, who was initially winning, absorbed countless blows in the second half of the bout until referee Richard Steele stopped it with two seconds left in round 12.

Although many still question whether Taylor should have been allowed to finish the bout on his feet (which would have given him the win), most experts agree that Taylor was never the same after that fight, and that the punishment he took, particularly in the Chavez bout, eventually led to his dementia pugilistica, a chronic brain syndrome developing from too many concussions. It usually begins within 12-16 years after the start of a fighter's career, and is more frequent in those who have fought more than 450 rounds.

Former ring physician Flip Homansky, who presided over countless Las Vegas championship bouts from the 1980s until 2000, agrees that a *clean* knockout is safer than a prolonged beating that leads to a TKO.

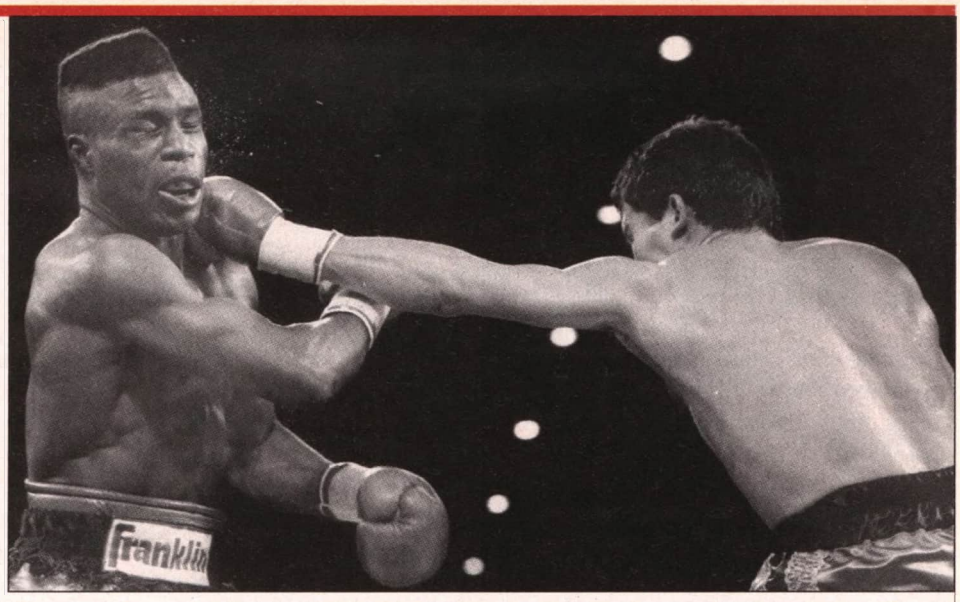
"The rope-a-dope is the perfect example of what not to do," said Homansky. "Multiple head shots are sub-concussive. The iron jaw is a recipe for disaster in a boxer."

In a sub-concussion condition, a boxer may initially have few or no symptoms, but if repeated, he may develop symptoms like those of Muhammad Ali.

PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton was lucky Pacquiao knocked him out so quickly

"No question about this one," said Dr. John Stiller, chief physician and neurologist for the Maryland State Athletic Commission. "I am more concerned about a sustained beating than a one-punch knockout. Only rarely does a one-punch knockout cause serious acute problems, and in those rare cases, I suspect something else was going on (e.g. unreported injury from sparring, a car accident, etc.) If it only took one good punch to cause problems, we would be seeing a hell of a lot more acute brain injuries."



Taylor would probably be in better health today if Chavez had tallied a clean kayo earlier in the fight

Knockouts occur from acceleration and/or deceleration blows. When Lennox Lewis and Hasim Rahman traded knockouts in their two 2001 heavyweight championship bouts, both were "acceleration" knockouts caused by a moving fist striking a stationary head. On the other hand, Samuel Peter's knockout of Jeremy Williams in 2004 was a "deceleration" knockout. Yes, Peter knocked down Williams, but it was Williams' head striking the canvas that knocked him out and caused him to seize.

Hatton may very well have suffered *both* an acceleration and deceleration knockout against Pacquiao. Judging by the loss of all muscle tone, which caused him to drop to the canvas in the limp manner he did, the left hand to the jaw that knocked him down probably knocked him out. Then, when Ricky crashed down and hit his head on the ring floor, he may have also suffered a deceleration knockout.

The ring physician and emergency teams are there to make certain the fighter quickly recovers, but the longer the unconsciousness the greater the risk. The fighter needs an immediate clear airway and supplemental oxygen. The latter was unfortunately not done at the Hatton fight. The longer the brain is deprived of adequate oxygen, the more likely post concussive symptoms persist.

Two factors determine the severity of a knockout: the length of unconsciousness and whether or not there was amnesia (memory loss for the events surrounding the fight) or confusion.

With a blow to the head, the brain is compressed, and blood flow is disrupted. If significant, the individual passes out. This allows the brain time to re-boot and reestablish complete blood flow while stopping further punishment.

In a technical knockout, the initial blows are not severe enough to result in loss of consciousness. Nonetheless, the fighter's defenses are lessened, which increases their susceptibility to chronic irreversible brain injury.

"There is often not much difference clinically between a TKO and kayo," said Stiller. "The significance is for the future of the fighter, his recovery time, and when you are going to allow him to compete again. The fighter stopped on excessive head blows or not able to defend himself would need just as much time to recover than a boxer who is actually knocked out."

Dr. Stiller recalled Gaby Canizales' 1986 technical knockout of Richie Sandoval. They fought for the WBA bantamweight title, and Sandoval had considerable difficulty making the 118-pound division limit.

"Sandoval didn't look right to me in comparison to other times where I had seen him fight," said Stiller. "Sandoval was knocked down in the first and third rounds, and was then knocked down three times in the seventh. With the last one, he was unconscious. I was worried he had a severe brain injury. My concern was based on the accumulation of head blows prior to the knockout, coupled with him looking lifeless on the mat."

In an interview I conducted with Sandoval regarding the fight for www.secondsout.com, the retired fighter said, "I don't even recall getting dressed … I wasn't winning. I was giving a go of it … It was just that I was underweight. The weigh-in was that morning. We were outside at Caesars under all those lights."

Sandoval had a seizure on the canvas, was hospitalized, and never fought again. He believes that if he hadn't been so dehydrated, he would have been successful that day.

The point of this article is not to diminish the medical significance of a kayo. On the other hand, the risks for a boxer with too much heart and an iron jaw are greater than when someone is caught with a big punch.

Unfortunately, we too often ignore acute and post-concussive symptoms following a technical knockout, as well as punishment absorbed while sparring with headgear.

"Any boxer who has experienced excessive head blows should be immediately checked after the match," said Stiller. "And if his condition does not appear to require going to the emergency room for follow-up and imaging (brain CT or MRI), it must be made clear that a responsible individual be with him all night, and immediately get him to the hospital if he has any symptoms of a concussion." ■

By Jim Bagg

If Bagg Writes It, It Will Come

In the 1839 play *Richelieu; Or The Conspiracy*, English author Edward Bulwer-Lytton coined the phrase "the pen is mightier than the sword." (And before you ask, yes, the Baggtastic knows that bit of trivia because he was alive in 1839, helping Eddie perfect his wording.) Unfortunately, the line has lost some of its meaning over the years, seeing as how nobody uses a sword anymore and hardly anyone even uses a pen. The modern version of the classic line would have to be "the Twitter update is mightier than the backpack bomb." It's a tad less zingy, but hey, at least the kids will know what you're talking about.

In any case, the Baggalooski brings this up because he's been reminded recently that the pen (or the keyboard or whatever) is indeed still quite mighty. In the June issue of THE RING, yours truly wrote about Glen Johnson—how he's worthy of Hall of Fame consideration, how everybody's been ducking him, how Chad Dawson owes him a rematch. Following the Baggceptional's lead, several other prominent writers demanded following Dawson's pointless victory over Antonio Tarver in May that he give Johnson a rematch. Dawson and his promoter, Gary Shaw, came up with excuse after excuse and did everything short of hiding in a cave in Afghanistan to avoid Johnson. But finally, thanks in large part to the media shaming them into it, they headed to the negotiating table with Johnson. As this issue went to press, the fight was just a dotted "i" and a crossed "t" away from being official.

Sure, it wasn't just the bad press that made it happen. It was also the lack of other intriguing fights that could be made for Dawson. It was HBO's refusal to pay for Dawson vs. the anonymous Tavoris Cloud. It was the fans doing their part to demand Dawson-Johnson II. But in the end, the Baggropractor is taking the bulk of the credit. Why? Allow the Baggster to answer that question with another question: Why not?

On the heels of the Baggman writing something and it becoming reality, there's only one conclusion to be drawn: The Baggadoodledoo had better just go ahead and write everything he wants to see happen in the sport of boxing, in case some higher power is at work here. So here goes:

Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez IV: Now that Izzy (how did a little Mexican guy get an old Jewish deli owner's nickname?) has been cleared to fight, and they've both had about a year and a half to recover from their ridiculous third fight, the fourth chapter simply has to happen. It doesn't matter what the weight is. If they're moving up to featherweight where there won't be a title at stake, fine, do it at featherweight. Just do it. To deny the boxing world this fight would be like cutting the nude scenes out of *The Bikini Carwash Company*.

Tomasz Adamek-Steve Cunningham II: Again, a no-brainer. Frankly, it's absurd that this rematch didn't happen immediately after their cruiserweight championship slugfest last December, but apparently Adamek's people wanted to milk his Bon Jovi-like drawing power in New Jersey for a little while before putting him in another fight he might lose.

Now the milking must end. It's time for the cream. It's time for HBO or Showtime to put up some money and make a great fight for divisional supremacy happen. (The Baggnanarama would put up the money himself, but he doesn't think the $112.18 in his bank account will be enough to get the job done.)

Shane Mosley-Andre Berto: There's been a lot said and written lately about how Mosley can't land a big fight. And that ain't about to change. The Manny Pacquiaos and Floyd Mayweathers and Juan Manuel Marquezes would all rather fight each other, and it doesn't seem like smart business for a 37-year-old fighter who scored a career-best win in

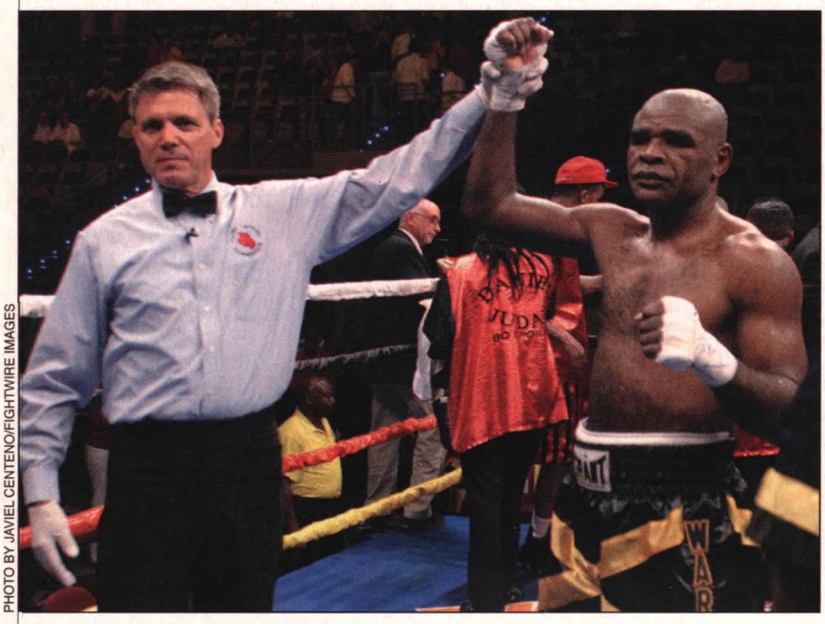


PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Bagg worked wonders for Johnson

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Marquez-Vazquez IV would be welcome at any weight

January to take the entire rest of the year off and kill his momentum. He needs to fight.

As for Berto, the boxing community just wants to find out already if this kid's got the goods or not. The way the Baggician sees it, either he beats Mosley and a star is born, or he doesn't and we can all stop wasting our time (and HBO can stop wasting its budget). It's a compelling fight, probably a first-rate action fight, and it makes sense for both guys. Everybody needs to stop dreaming of a date with Pacquiao and make this fight happen.

Brian Kenny vs. Floyd Mayweather in the 2012 presidential election: Ignoring the fact that incumbent Barack Obama will automatically be a part of that election, what could be more fun than a series of televised debates between "Money" and "BK"? Mayweather vs. Kenny, town-hall style, is a can't-miss—especially when compared to Mayweather's fights. After all, Kenny's 13-minute *SportsCenter* interview with Little Floyd in May provided more back-and-forth action than any Mayweather fight since ... *uh* ... still thinking ...

Now imagine two or three solid months of these two going at it on the campaign trail. It's like Abbott and Costello crossed with Ali and Cosell. That equals entertainment. And don't try to tell the Star-Spangled Bagger that neither Kenny nor Mayweather is qualified to be a part of a presidential election. Have we really forgotten about Sarah Palin already?

Hepatitis for all heavyweights: There's only one way to repair the disaster that is modern heavyweight boxing, and that's to wipe out the entire division and start from scratch. Nothing against Ruslan Chagaev personally, but when his latest scheduled rematch with Nicolay Valuev got cancelled on account of a faint whiff of hepatitis, the Bagginator yelled out, "Hep, hep, hooray!" It was one less pointless alphabet title fight for a belt that hasn't meant anything since it was stripped from Lennox Lewis more than nine years ago.

From a purse-split standpoint, you can see why the fighters care about their belt-holding status. But in terms of fans,

PHOTO BY NOEL VASQUEZ/GETTY IMAGES

Two thumbs up for Mosley-Berto

The Monthly Mailbagg

This month the Octobagg not only received e-mails from the commoners, but he also got one from a celebrity of sorts, recent Stingray winner Kina Malpartida. Read on for the most star-studded Mailbagg ever:

Hey Baggdaddy,

It's a pleasure to get in touch with you. Firstly, thanks for putting me on the latest RING magazine, I was very happy to see my picture there. I noted on the bottom of the article that I'm entitled to an award. I live in Los Angeles, California.

Best wishes,
Kina

Kina,

The pleasure is all the Baggdaddy's, my darling. However, he thought he made himself perfectly clear that you're expected to claim your award in person, with the implication that there might be a bit of quid pro quo.

But since the last thing Mount Baggmore needs is a harassment suit, he'll ease up on that request. Instead, starting this day, all Stingray winners are entitled to an actual, authentic certificate acknowledging their achievement. The Baggamaniac cleared it with Boss Collins, so all past Stingray winners, and of course all winners going forward, can e-mail their mailing addresses to Baggmeister@yahoo.com and claim their awards. That's not just a Bagg joke. This is legit.

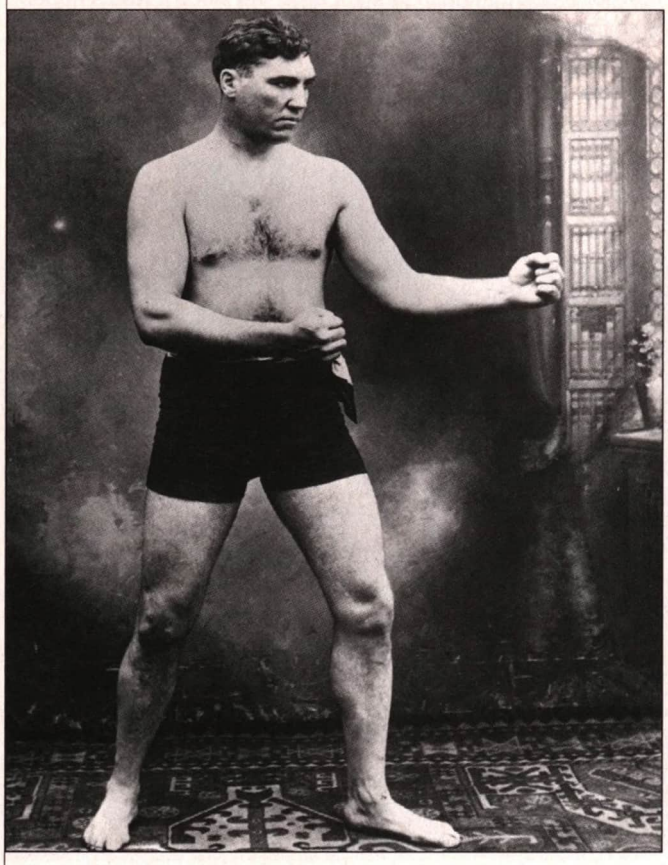
That said, Kina, if you're ever on the East Coast, the Bagganova's door is always open.

Hey Bagg-ola-palooza,

What's all this I hear about how Ricky Hatton should retire? His only two losses were against the two best fighters in the world. Let's not forget that Hatton had five defenses of the 140-pound belt he took from Kostya Tszyu before finally losing to the great Pacquiao. What's more, he has the relentlessly aggressive style that keeps fans loyal. It is obvious to me that he is more than a match for anyone at 140, including Timothy Bradley, Junior Witter, maybe even Nate Campbell. So, fight fans, let's give Ricky his due.

Also, I'm tired of all the Klitschko-bashing. Let's face it, they're on top, and when you're on top you don't always get your due (see Larry Holmes and Lennox Lewis). It may be unusual to have two brothers share the title, but I think it's kind of cool, actually. And what's so boring about their fights? They knock out everybody. I friggin' love knockouts!

Hatton And Klitschko Crazy, Tucson, AZ



The original Jess was no beauty

is anyone still paying attention? Some prominent boxing writers actually wasted their time with columns on whether or not Chagaev should be stripped of his "champion in recess" status. Newsflash: None of your readers give a rat's intestine about Chagaev, Valuev, or that belt.

The division is an utter disaster, so let's just spread a little hepatitis and start over. And if you're looking for someone who, as a young man, had a special gift for spreading disease, then look no further than the Baggorrhea. The world's greatest boxing writer will be more than happy to use his expertise to head up this project.

A hot young actress named Jess Willard: We have a popular musician named Jack Johnson. We now have a popular comedian named Jim Jefferies. It's only logical that we get another Jess Willard in our lives, but the "Jess" needs to be short for "Jessica" and she needs to have double-Ds and wear outfits reminiscent of Jim Corbett's thong boxing trunks.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Darnell Boone, who has earned a reputation as one of boxing's true tough guys and could be emerging as a poor man's Emanuel Augustus: ugly record, always dangerous.

On May 29, middleweight Boone earned his second upset victory in less than two months, stopping Calvin Green inside seven rounds in Baton Rouge. To be fair, Green, at 20-3-1 (12) coming in, was no great shakes. He's probably on his way to Journeymanville, USA, himself. But his record

Dear Crazy,

The good news is, not all of your opinions are completely off-base. The Bagglepuss agrees, to an extent, about Hatton. If "The Hitman" should decide he wants to retire right now with all the money he'll ever need and the mental faculties to enjoy it, good for him. But if he decides to fight on, then good for him also. As you noted, he lost to two guys who were considered pound-for-pound number one at the time he fought them. He has every right to take on a Bradley or a Witter or a Campbell and find out whether or not he can still beat the best of the rest.

As for the Klitschko-bashing, if you really have to ask, "What's so boring about their fights?" then the Baggsketball has to ask "What kind of a price did you get on those magic mushrooms?" Knockouts are nice, but round after round of safety-first tedium to get to the knockout is not exactly thrilling. You can't waterboard a guy, then give him a delicious slice of cherry pie, and say, "Wasn't that fun? You got to enjoy some pie!"

Of course, comparing a Klitschko fight to waterboarding is a bit extreme. Unless we're talking about Wladimir vs. Sultan Ibragimov.

It's okay with Bagg if Hatton decides to fight on

PHOTO BY MARK RALSTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

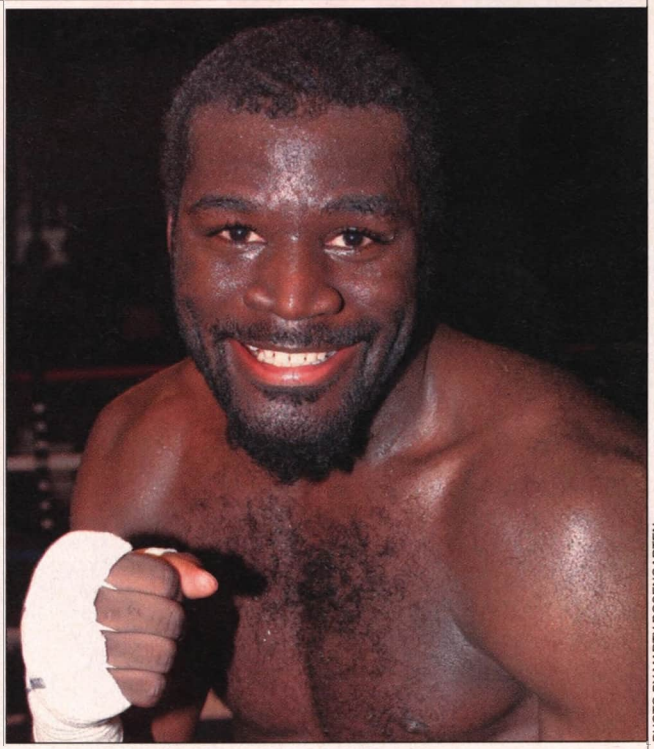
was a lot better than Boone's mark of 15-10-2 (5). And he was expected to win this 10-rounder.

But Boone doesn't go along with what's expected. Among 10 losses, only one came by stoppage (with distance losses against the likes of Jean Pascal, Anthony Thompson, and Andre Ward). In his previous bout, he beat 12-2 Louis Turner. He also owns wins over fighters with records at the time of 7-0, 8-0, 6-0, and 17-2, plus he drew with a 13-0-1 opponent. His schedule has been, at times, remarkable. Would you believe he fought 12 times in 2006?

On this particular card in Baton Rouge, most of the fights went as expected. An 8-1-1 fighter beat an 8-10-1 fighter. A 4-2-1 guy beat a 3-5-1 guy. A prospect with a 4-0 record beat a pug with a 9-34-2 record. But in the main event, the guy with 10 losses took out the guy with only three. And that's well-worthy of a Stingray.

By the way, as noted in the Monthly Mailbagg on this page, all Stingray winners will henceforth receive actual award certificates. So, Darnell, send the Baggalicious your address and you'll have proof to show the whole world that you don't just come to collect paydays—you come to collect Stingrays. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.



Boone has reason to smile

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Take Your Pick

What is most likely to happen: Mayweather fighting Pacquiao, the Klitschko brothers squaring off, or James Toney losing over 10 pounds for his next fight?

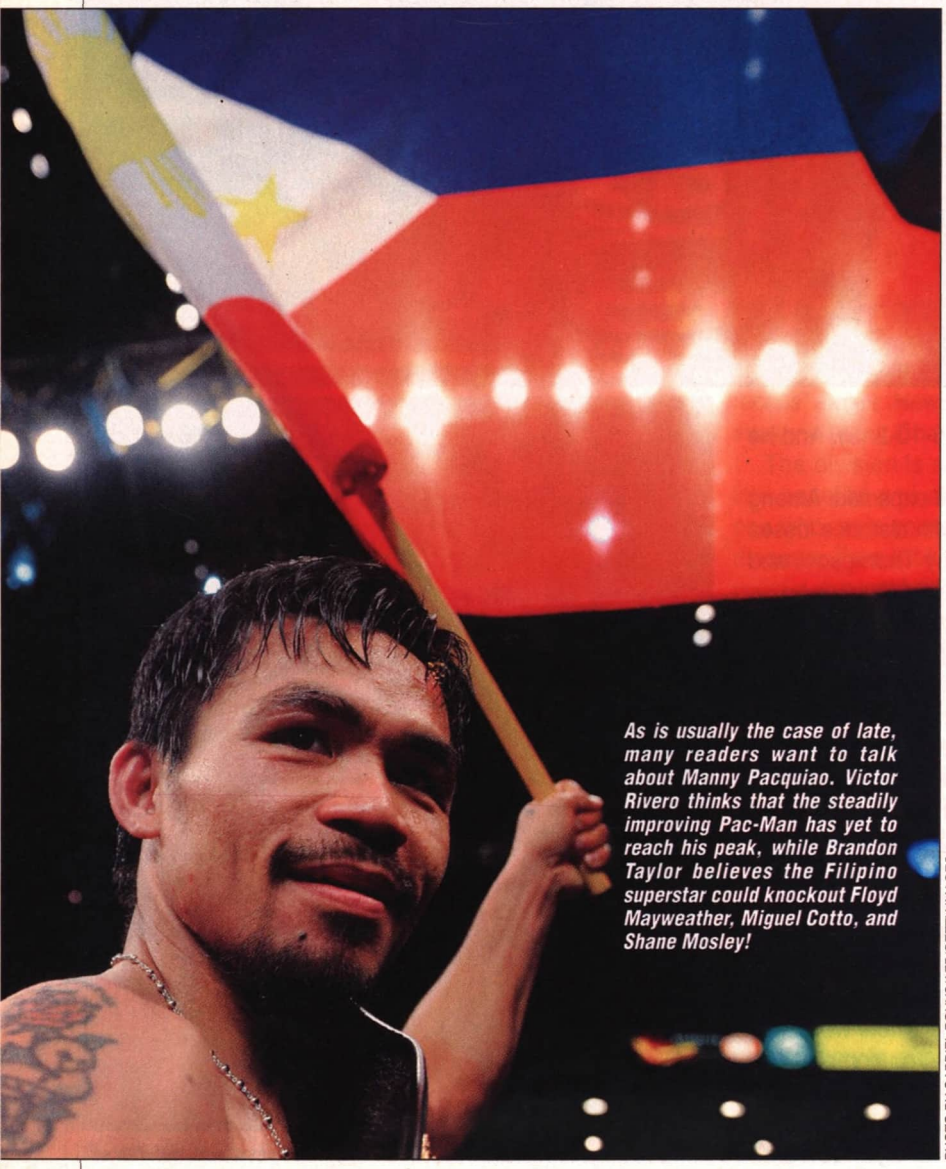
ROBERT LIGUORI
Absecon, NJ

Primetime Pacquiao

Some people say that Manny Pacquiao has fought top fighters such as Oscar De La Hoya when they were past their prime, but it is actually Manny who isn't in his prime. He is not in his prime because he hasn't reached it yet!

Pacquiao is no longer the same one-handed fighter that knocked out Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales. The footwork, defense, and right hand were all missing back then, but now they help make him a complete fighter and the true pound-for-pound king.

VICTOR RIVERO
vrivero22@yahoo.com



As is usually the case of late, many readers want to talk about Manny Pacquiao. Victor Rivero thinks that the steadily improving Pac-Man has yet to reach his peak, while Brandon Taylor believes the Filipino superstar could knockout Floyd Mayweather, Miguel Cotto, and Shane Mosley!

PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

More Manny

I read that Oscar De La Hoya said that Manny Pacquiao has little punching power. I think Oscar is delirious considering that Pacquiao gave him the worst beating of his career. Pacquiao was one of the two or three hardest punchers in the sport in the smaller weight classes (135 pounds and under) and his power has carried over to the heavier weight classes.

Freddie Roach has made Pacquiao a better boxer the last few years, and every time I watch a Pacquiao fight I expect him to win by knockout. I think he can stop Shane Mosley, Miguel Cotto, and Floyd Mayweather. I just wish Manny were a little bigger, because I would love to see him fight Paul Williams, which I know will never happen.

BRANDON TAYLOR
Blt1990@sbcglobal.net

The Truth Hurts

Calling boxers "no-hopers" is unsportsmanlike (as THE RING did when referring to Marco Antonio Rubio in the July 2009 issue). The guy can't be too bad if THE RING magazine is writing about him.

MARCO ARCARO
Ontario, Canada

Editor's note: It is no insult to tell the truth. Rubio had "no hope" of beating middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik, as was made obvious

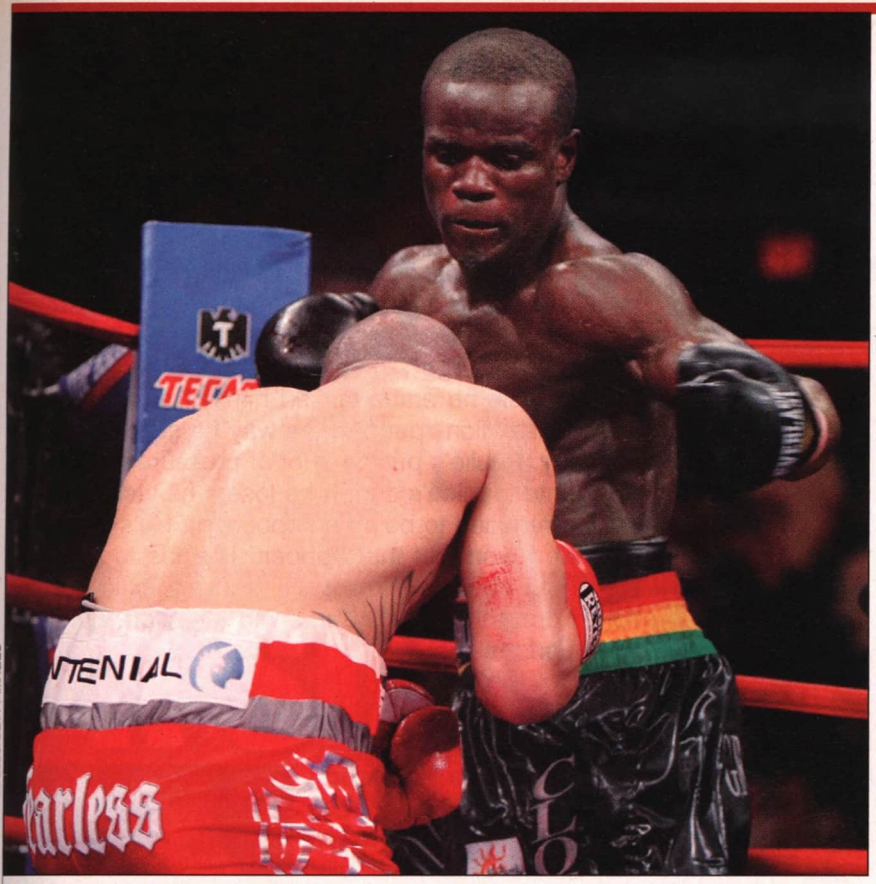


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Joshua Clottey throws a left hook at a crouching Miguel Cotto during their June 13 bout at Madison Square Garden. Cotto won a close split decision, but reader Joe Thompson is among those who thinks Clottey was ripped off and should have gotten the nod.

by the Mexican's ninth-round TKO defeat. In fact, Rubio did not win a single round on any of the three judges' scorecards.

Disappointed In Demark

I was rather disappointed to read the super middleweight section of "The State Of The Game" in the July 2009 issue of THE RING. It states that, like the decade leading up to Joe Calzaghe's win over Jeff Lacy, no one outside the UK cared for the division that Calzaghe "ruled" for 10 years, and that the same thing goes for the situation today. This is an almost embarrassingly US-centric statement.

Throughout most of Europe and Australia, the super middleweight division was one of the most popular divisions to follow from the early part of this decade, and it wasn't because of Joe Calzaghe. Fighters such as Sven Ottke, Mads Larsen, Anthony Mundine, Markus Beyer, and Mikkel Kessler drew thousands of fans to arenas in their respective countries. Even though Ottke was about as interesting to watch as an 80-year-old playing checkers, his fights still drew millions of people to the TV screens. In the meantime, Calzaghe was largely an afterthought, known to fight almost exclusively shot Americans or fellow Brits in half-empty halls in Wales, while ducking the more legitimate contenders in his division until they were no longer contenders.

Likewise, the 168-pound division today boasts plenty of interesting fighters if you can ignore the fact that their passport isn't from the United States.

JENS-CHRISTIAN JENSEN
Copenhagen, Denmark

Authors Take Issue

THE RING magazine, from its bully pulpit, is attempting to trash the book *Joe Gans: A Biography Of The First African American World Boxing Champion* in retaliation for its authors challenging the opinions of the magazine's founder, Nat Fleischer. Gans should be revered as an African-American hero, and instead THE RING, as the self-proclaimed "Bible Of Boxing," is actively seeking to keep the memory of this great champion buried by publishing a ranting blog (sic) by Pete Ehrmann. As authors, we think we handled Fleischer with kid gloves. We did not take Fleischer to task for referring to black fighters as "the Ethiopian menace" and "the Sons of Ham," among other derogatory epithets. Readers should judge the book for its own merits.

COLLEEN AYCOCK
& MARK SCOTT
Cka13705@aol.com

Editor's note: THE RING stands by Pete Ehrmann's review of the Joe Gans bio and reminds co-authors Ms. Aycock and Mr. Scott that they requested that THE RING review their book. It should also be noted that Nat Fleischer ranked Gans as the greatest lightweight of all-time.

A Vote For Clottey

Over the years, I have watched literally thousands of boxing matches in person and on TV, and I am always amazed at the disparate decisions that often occur. Recently, Miguel Cotto was given a split decision over Joshua Clottey. Clottey clearly out-boxed and out-hustled Cotto, even though Cotto scored a flash knockdown in the first round. Clottey wasn't hurt (except perhaps his feelings) and was up immediately. Clottey backed up Cotto the entire fight with many clean punches that found their mark. In contrast, Cotto threw plenty of punches, but most were ineffective, caught by Clottey's arms and hands.

One judge, who obviously is incompetent, scored the fight 116-111 for Cotto. Why are these guys allowed to be fight judges? I'm sure if the next day hadn't been Puerto Rico Day in New York, Clottey would have won. He deserved it. Obviously, the large Puerto Rican contingent in the Garden swayed the judges.

JOE THOMPSON
Charlotte, NC ■

By Joseph Santoliquito

Diaz-Malignaggi Meet In Crucial Fight

Paulie Malignaggi and **Juan Diaz** are still relatively young fighters. Malignaggi is 28, Diaz 25. Most people are just beginning their adult lives at those ages, building careers, getting out of graduate school, starting families. Boxing, however, has a way of accelerating the aging process and forcing this-is-it scenarios. And when Diaz, 34-2 (17), and Malignaggi, 26-2 (5), meet on August 22 in a catchweight (138½ pounds) showdown at Houston's Toyota Center on HBO's *Championship Boxing*, one fighter's career could come to a screeching halt, while the other moves forward.

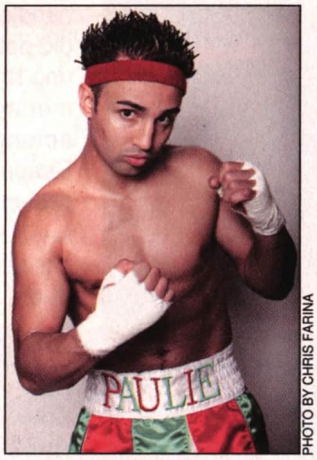


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Malignaggi feels a loss to Diaz could be a career-breaker

Both men enter this fight under similar circumstances, coming back from blistering knockout defeats—the first of their careers. True, Malignaggi tallied an eight-round decision over **Chris Fernandez** in April after being stopped in the 11th-round by then RING-junior welterweight world champion **Ricky Hatton** last November. But the Fernandez fight was little more than a paid workout.

Diaz has lost two of his last three, getting rocked by **Nate Campbell** in March 2008 and then suffering a hard, punishing defeat to **Juan Manuel Marquez** in March of this year.

Diaz needs to show he still has something left after two grueling losses, and Malignaggi still feels he needs to show he's among the best 140-pounders in the world. Although they are both in precarious positions, one of them feels he has more at stake if he loses.

"That's definitely me," Malignaggi said. "This is the type of fight where the loser goes home. I understand the politics of the world: Diaz is represented by Golden Boy, and they're powerful and rule the sport right now. If Diaz loses, he'll get another big chance.

"If I lose, I get nothing. They throw me back on the scrapheap. I feel my back is against the wall more than Diaz. I also feel I have more to prove. This is a fight where my true ability has to come out, the way it used to when I fought on ESPN early in my career."

Malignaggi made a corner change, going with **Sherif Younan** to replace **Buddy McGirt** as his trainer. "The Magic Man" wants to erase the Hatton stain—and that means he needs a terrific performance against Diaz.

"Paulie thinks he has his career to lose," said **Lou DiBella**, Malignaggi's promoter. "He's a very proud kid and he feels he embarrassed himself against Hatton and that he didn't perform the way he should have. In one way, Paulie's putting a lot of pressure on himself, going into the lion's den. If he loses, he won't let himself be reduced to being an opponent. He's too smart for that. I won't let that happen. He has to go down there and perform. He's walking into a difficult situation. I don't think it's a must-win situation, but it's a must-perform fight."

Listen Up

It has become increasingly difficult for **Nonito Donaire** to make the 112-pound flyweight limit. So the IBF flyweight titlist and the Philippines' second-most important fighter feels that it's time to make a comfortable move to the 115-pound junior bantamweight class. Donaire, 21-1 (14), will take the plunge into the junior bantamweight division on a Top Rank pay-per-view card on August 15 at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. That is a certainty. What wasn't certain as of press time was whom "The Filipino Flash" would be stepping in against. Donaire was scheduled to take on **Hugo Cazares**, but the junior bantamweight contender backed out of the fight. A possible replacement was **Bernabe Concepcion**, 29-1-1 (16). Whoever it is, this will be Donaire's first venture since 2007 into the junior bantam division, which is topped in THE RING ratings by a familiar face to Donaire, **Vic Darchinyan**, the WBA/WBC/IBF junior bantamweight titlist. As a flyweight, Donaire has stopped his last five opponents, including Darchinyan back in July 2007. If it is Concepcion, he'll be coming down to 115 for the first time since 2004. The Donaire card was supposed to be augmented by a featherweight clash between **Steven Luevano**, 36-1-1 (15), rated number two by THE RING, and Concepcion. But if Concepcion turns out to be Cazares' replacement, Luevano will be looking for a new dance partner. ■

Donaire is ready to make the jump to junior bantamweight

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